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SQUARE · PEGS

BY

MRS · A · D · T · WHITNEY



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SQUARE PEGS

BY

MRS. A. D. T. WHITNEY

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The Riverside Press Cambridge

PS 3249

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SQUARE PEGS.

CHAPTER I.

CHARLOCK COTTAGE.

A COMMON kitchen garden and small orchard plantation ran down from before the back stoop to the rough fence that shut off a bit of meadow.

Beyond the meadow strip, hidden under low, weedy banks, where alders grew and blackbirds nested in the tangled coverts, scampered a bright little brook, making its own music all the time, accompanied in the day by the whistle and chirr of the restless winged creatures, and all night long by the booming and shrilling of the frogs.

Over the brook began a stretch of quiet woodland. Out of its stillness came, in the long evenings, the cry of the whippoorwill: sometimes an owl hooted. Besides the blackbirds who especially homed and haunted, other singing birds made the mornings sweet, and the tender iteration of his two notes betrayed the near, shy presence of the quail.

The house standing at the head of this garden and meadow slope was a plain, low structure, two rooms deep. It fronted on the village street, with only a fifteen-foot dooryard, shaded, however, by two majestic elms, one on either side the gateway, whose inner branches swept the roof.

The four lower rooms were a parlor, a kitchen behind

it, a milliner's shop at the other front, and a bedroom behind that. Upstairs were small cottage chambers. One of these, whose little dormer window looked right into the heart of the elm, and the secrecy of a hangbird's nest, was Estabel Charlock's, when she came to stay here with her "other aunt."

Estabel Charlock was being brought up in sections, as it were, by two aunts, in very irregular alternations. The two respectively denominated each other as above quoted. The aunt in present administration was the milliner, plain Miss Esther Charlock.

John Charlock had loved his sister, and desired to give his child her name, which had been his mother's also; but his wife, Isabel, had made compromise with this fanciful combination. John could not refuse her claim, put only second; and the natural shortening brought it about, in his own use, to his own intent.

None of them thought, or perhaps knew, the remote signification of the two, or what their joining might suggest as prophecy. The girl's life, as measured in the present, might give no hint of its fulfillment; but the "new name" was waiting for her to grow to; the ultimate was in bud under the initial; we are told it shall be so, in final revelation, with every spirit.

Estabel was not a beautiful child; she did not shine, in any way, as a morning star; she did not come up above her horizon in time for that. Hester the Beautiful is not always the planet of dawn. She climbs all day, sometimes, behind the sun.

Estabel had, as every human creature has, the beginnings of beauty; but, as happens with so many of us, very few persons detected them. It needed a sort of second sight, in which people are lovely who fail of the immediate positive sign.

Her hair was pale and straight. Neither she nor any one else knew anything better to do with it than to draw it sharply back from her thin face, and braid it in

a tight, tidy, uncompromising tail, tied often with a crumpled ribbon. The tail was slenderer than if the hair had been of coarser fibre or more generously handled, and its faint color was easily put out by any deep contrast of its fastening. Dark brown, which she mostly wore, extinguished it. Pale blue made it look nice, but was too delicate; she could not have fresh ribbons every day; as I have said, the dark ones, even, were worn until they were well crumpled. But it must be confessed that up to her present age it had been true of her that she crumpled herself pretty generally to match.

She had clear, penetrating eyes; straight-glancing, demanding. Their color was not determined; it was ordinarily, perhaps, a dusky gray, but with a curious central deepening at times, like the heart of a chrysoberyl; and if you noted, a luminous flash also, like the irradiation of that rare, peculiar gem. The lashes and brows were dark. This was "queer, with light hair, and no particular colored eyes," common observers used to say. It was really nature's caveat, her bespeakal of right to perfect her own plan at leisure.

Estabel never thought much about her clothes. They were things to get on, before she could be free of the day; before she could begin to make any delight of it. They were something in the way when a proper appearance was necessary before she could enjoy. She envied the hens, who fluttered down from their roosts in all their feathers.

She did not live very much, as yet, in any present objective of herself. Her impulses urged forward into all that was beyond. And yet they returned, in a strange, half-comprehended reflex, upon that entity of her which was building, as the bees' comb builds, from the far-fetched wax and honey of the fields.

She wanted it all, somehow, in herself, — her very own life. She wanted to be.

With the impatience of an intense, imaginative nature, she wanted to be, at once. She anticipated herself, and in all sorts of successive, incongruous ways. Perhaps the elements of any one of the projections of life in which her fancy indulged, and in which she posed herself, enacting scenes and situations, — trying herself on, — may have been in her, waiting circumstance and choice. At present she was everything by turns and nothing long or completely; everything in dream, and scarcely anything in actuality. How else could it be with a child of fifteen, in whom the restless, eager, unformed woman-soul was struggling?

Her mother's sister, Vera Cumsden, was a richer woman than Esther Charlock. While she had kept on, an independent spinster, in the Cumsden family home at Oxtou which had fallen into her final sole possession, or when in her absolute freedom she had chosen to spend an occasional winter in the great, distant city, she had now and then claimed Estabel as her companion for a convenient season. This was partly conscience, feeling that she must somehow do her share, and partly an augmented ease and pleasure to herself, especially in her transient metropolitan sojourns, when to be quite alone, and without obvious tie or object, was in a way awkward, as well as sometimes dreary. It is often easier to carry one's self well with some little thing in one's hand. Aunt Vera took Estabel in hand, and was comfortable.

She would fit her out with a pretty wardrobe for the time being, take personal pains with her, and transform her briefly into quite a different bit of little-girlhood, in quite a new episode of experience. It seemed to Estabel as unreal as any of the other dreams, when she was remanded to the solitudes and small samenesses of Stillwick.

The pretty wardrobe would be all worn out, except perhaps a gown or two, which Miss Esther would keep

back thriftily from common use until they grew old-fashioned altogether, and had to be altered with some scrimp and loss, to do duty where fresh, plain garments would have been far more in graceful keeping, which is all that can illustrate style or taste, or that they have any business to mean. A frequent sense of this unsuitableness handicapped the ease and confidence upon which good manner depends; Estabel lapsed into an awkwardness of chagrined self-consciousness. Miss Esther thought "her visit to Tophthorpe" or to Oxton, as the case might be, "had not improved her much." The verdict went to intensify the conditions upon which it based itself.

That Estabel was capable of being so wrought upon, proved that she was not yet in the reality of herself; that she had not come to her full and fair opportunity. Nobody thought of that; people thought, here in Stillwick, that she had great opportunities; they expected her to come back among them with a very visible city polish. They might have resented that; as it was, they said of her, with a certain satisfaction, that she had no manners, after all.

Dropping back from her brief holiday and half-training into the inevitable Stillwick homeliness and the not-caring that was habitual to her, that finer instinct which might have concerned itself with expression in externals was driven back with all the more force upon idealities. She brought into her secret world a small, imperfect store of things gathered up elsewhere, and lived them out in her strange, solitary fashion.

Under the elms, on the broad, flat doorstep, she would sit in the flickering moonlight and shadow, telling some story of imagined experience or some confidence of intimate thought to a companion as mythical as the tale, yet as real as the thought. Myth was verity to her, as it was to the mythmakers of old. It is the life of the young soul and of the young world.

If the things of shadow are not fact at the moment, they are shadows flung from fact, that has been, back of literal memory, or may be, beyond actual foresight. Estabel made up what she pleased; there was everything in all the world to draw from, if everything were not here in Stillwick and Aunt Esther's little domain. Common things covered the invisible; pine woods were the hiding of Elf-Land; fairy tales told the secret that the earth was full of.

She made up friends; she made up society; she made up a lover, even, like those in books she read; and the lover was just as simple-natural as all the rest. She only wanted him that she might be cared for first; might be by somebody altogether delighted in and understood. The people of her self-created sphere were kind and good to her; they were grand and sweet, noble and wise; she built a little kingdom of heaven for herself, which indeed, some tell us, we are all to do, out of our best and happiest.

Once in a great while she pretended to herself a mother; but that came too near a half-comprehended truth. She did not dare go far with that. It was the fictitious replacement of a real loss. To tell things to her mother made the tears come, she hardly knew why. The child's life had begun with a missing. It had seemed to be just off time with everything, from the forgotten start.

Her day leisures were filled with the acting out of fantasies. In pleasant weather the kitchen-garden and bit of orchard became her haunt, her theatre, her world. They represented all things to her, suiting all her moods.

Among the lilies and the hollyhocks, the asparagus and corn, — in the shady fruit-tree alleys and between the rows of gooseberry and currant bushes, she walked as in a great, gay, happy concourse. She trailed imaginary velvets or sheeny silks, as a splendid, fashionable

woman; there was music of the birds and of the brook in the air; light shimmered softly among the shadows or flamed broadly over open space. The company assembled with her was individualized, historied, and grouped in her imagination. She was in the midst, admired, attended. She had her share of life. Only her share; everybody was charming, and she was charming, too. She was let in, and made welcome. It was a harmless, sublimated world; she had the good of everything that might be, and the bad, the mean, was all distilled away.

Sometimes she quietly found a place where she might sit hidden; then she fancied herself in some vast, still, rapt congregation, listening to great words; stirred by the fine enthusiasms of an uplifted multitude. Often she read such words, that she had found, aloud; oftener she sat still, and thought them.

Many a Sunday hour she passed so, in a dream of worship and reverence that never came to her in the glaring little village church, with its cross-lighting windows and white paint, its rustle of Sunday gowns and fans, its motley level of best bonnets, its halting, irregular murmur of a newly innovated Responsive Service, and then the flourish of the rural choir in the weekly glory of its ambitious demonstration. It was better set forth here, she thought, — the thing they tried to represent.

Again, she would go out upon the meadow slope beyond it all, and become a great actress, before a brilliant, spellbound audience, rehearsing scenes that she had learned by heart out of Shakespeare; while a low hush lay upon everything except her voice, until broken at some apposite climax by the wind of an applause that set the cornblades shivering, and bowed to her feet the delicate, plummy panicles of the flowering grass.

She danced, she sang, she improvised; she recited poems that she had written in the solitude of her room,

when Aunt Esther was in the shop, and she was supposed to be mending her stockings. I am afraid the stocking was often put on in a hurry and the heel that should have been mended pulled down and tucked into the shoe.

"Esther! Es-ther! Es-ther-bel!"

The shrill call rang from the back doorstone.

Estabel, in the midst of the last scene from the "Lady of the Lake," was grandly elocutionizing for the King, while maintaining her own pose and expression as Ellen Douglas. She hurried on between the imperative calls and variations of her own proper name, with Fitz-James's gentle questioning,

"Hast thou no other boon to crave?
No other captive friend to save?"

"Estabel! why *don't* you come? Make haste; I want you!"

She made haste; rushed on, as chorus, with the concluding lines in which her dramatic soul delighted, taking her own part in the thrilling tableau while vividly imagining to herself all the rest of it.

"His chain of gold the king unstrung,
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand."

— "Yes, auntie, what is it?"

And with suddenest change, the Lady of Loch Katrine left Stirling Castle, audience room, monarch, Douglas, Malcolm, and all; the actress sprang over the footlights — prosaically the low fence between meadow and garden — among her audience, and ran swiftly up, the straightest way, through the middle path, toward the clothes yard and the kitchen stoop.

"What in the world is the child doing there?"

Another voice which Estabel had not heard had just asked that. Some one had followed Aunt Esther to the doorway, and stood behind her.

"Nothing, — *in the world*. She never is in the world," answered Miss Charlock. "Hurry, child! Your other aunt's come! Don't you see? Did n't you hear? What were you about?"

"Yes, I heard. But I had to finish. I came as quick as I could. I was doing the end of the 'Lady of the Lake.' Fitz-James and I, you know, were the 'centre of the glittering ring, and Snowdown's knight was Scotland's king.'"

"You look fit to be the 'centre of a glittering ring'!" Miss Charlock exclaimed with force. "You're a glittering fiddlestick! — I don't know what you will do with her in Tophthorpe, sister-in-law-in-law!"

With which gently humorous title of her own research and application, Miss Charlock got round the difficulties between distance and intimacy, cleverly compounding the two.

CHAPTER II.

THE OTHER AUNT.

THE "other aunt" has not been properly introduced.

She was originally Miss Vera Cumsden; but in the last two years, during which Estabel had been left to the monotonies of Stillwick, over which her own bright, shifting fancies had to play with continual transforming flash of light and color to make them endurable, Miss Cumsden had married, spent nine months in Europe, and returned to her native country to establish herself in a handsome home in Tophthorpe. It does not matter which American city that is; it may stand, in certain respects, for any; we will not be too local, as if to charge upon any one centre peculiarities or conditions that may seem invidious, or claim for it characteristics of a comparative superiority. Such peculiarities are less peculiar than may be commonly supposed; the conditions and characteristics are largely typical, and may be found, in but slightly varying illustration, in any centre whatever of busy, striving, emulous — generous or petty — real or pretentious — human life.

Aunt Vera married — and at thirty-eight years old — Mr. Abel Clymer. He was a chinaware merchant and importer, extremely well off for that time and fashion, conspicuous indeed as a moneyed man, and fully intending to be more so; able to begin life at forty-five, at a differently advanced point from that at which he must have started at twenty-five. What he may have gained or lost in essentials in the years between, this story, except by implication, will not undertake to

tell. The values that he placed on things, the surroundings by which he materialized himself, may indicate results of the living of a score of years which, except for a record of buying and selling and getting ready to be, remains perhaps a blank.

It was a very comfortable marriage. Neither party had any unreasonable ideals, — at least, as regarded each other; it may as well be stated here as anywhere, though it will probably state itself all along, that each and jointly they had certain practical ideals of means and place. Abel Clymer was eager and shrewd and ambitious for the means, which involved place also, among his fellow aspirants in trade and on exchange; the securing of these he thought ought to include all else; but he could not attend to everything, or represent himself everywhere, in all relations. A wife was needed, and he married her; he left the social ambitions and management to her share of responsibility in the partnership.

With his money and his activity and his shrewd judgment, he was of consequence among men in civil and political affairs. He was on the Common Council; he was at the front in any enterprise or public manifestation which required a man of a certain amount of influence, and of a readiness also to put time and energy into the matter with zeal and pride. This brought about connections which were semi-social in the degree he coveted; he hobnobbed with the masculine side of Tophthorpe aristocracy; he gave, and was invited to, dinners and suppers where men came or entertained whose wives knew nothing about him conventionally. A wife of his own would be the missing link; there were things that only a woman could do.

He had too much common sense to think that he could marry direct into the highest mystic round, — or even to wish to do so; also, he had no mind to take meek second place to his wife; he wanted a woman with

but the capacity and personality to work with him to his object; to "keep up her end," he phrased it to himself. He would rather earn place, as he had earned money, by original effort and ability, than be lifted into it over a wall. There was something of delight in difficulty; something of inspiration in a vigorous campaign. Whatever is *worth* while *takes* while, he reflected; that goes in the very saying.

He bought a house on Mount Street; he put it in the hands of a good architect and builder, with waiting orders also at a leading upholsterer's, who dealt only in the best; then he and Mrs. Clymer sailed for Europe, a fine thing to do in those days, and a fine thing to refer to after it was done.

With this experience and prestige, and the tangible evidences in elegant accumulations of foreign travel, they returned in due time and took possession of the showy mansion that had been made ready for them; grand in furnishings of velvet and silk and glass and gilt, profuse in equipment of porcelain, crystal, and silver and fine linen. There was a linen-room, and a china-room; closets were not adequate. The china-room lay in an angle between hall, back drawing-room, and dining-room, accessible from all, and glitteringly visible, through casually opened doors, to either. Its deeply loaded shelves showed their splendid ranges from behind plate-glass sliding sashes.

The recesses of the back drawing-room served as library. Shelves from floor to ceiling — plate-glass again, and carved frames — held fine array of standard works, immaculate, unfingered, their ranks unbroken, each answering to name and place like soldiers at roll call and on parade, as yet unsummoned into action. In short, the whole establishment represented an attainment in life, in all directions, yet to be. It was a draft in advance.

It was all a little, — nay, a good deal, — in advance

of the taste and habit of the day. Mr. Clymer was ahead of his neighbors in the outward sign. All down Mount Street were good, substantial houses, inhabited by good, substantial families, who need hang out no placard of what they meant to be; wherein stood the same old-fashioned mahogany and hair-cloth, the same quaint sideboards and long sofas with rolled pillows and brass rosettes, that had stood there, or elsewhere in the same relations, fifty years before; where the handsome old looking-glasses, not over-big, hung above modest side and card tables, instead of paneled mirrors fitted to the entire walls, and resting upon low marble consoles adorned with costly vases. Beautiful, rare alabasters there might be, or stately bronzes; heirlooms, not things of purchase within memory of present owners, — people, like their ancestral properties, of a sort and poise that could afford to stand as they were for a century; who had at least a century behind them; who represented not a future, but a past.

Mr. and Mrs. Clymer, with their fine ambitions, their lavish anticipations, were, after all, off time. They made the mistake of hundreds; the great secret, which so few have learned, — which indeed, in the contrariety of circumstance, so few can compass, — is to coincide with hour, condition, and genuine opportunity.

The Clymers were about to bring a new element into their operations.

Aunt Vera had bethought herself of her duty to her niece.

A young girl, to educate among the best, to make association among the best, to help them draw upon their future by a hold upon the coming social order always forming and rapidly succeeding; to entertain for her, to make motive and centre of her for what they could not speedily and outright do for themselves, — this would be a fine idea and work, at once of generosity, kindness, and utility.

So the big gray horses were put to the barouche, — only two other families on Mount Street then kept a carriage and pair, — were driven around in the early forenoon from the stables, and bore Mrs. Clymer away along River Street to Royston Bridge and over into the wide, pleasant country.

At this moment of the story they stand, flinging up their heads and rattling their bright harness, before Miss Charlock's front gate, under the elms. A school-house nearly opposite has just poured forth its little rustic crowd, which loiters in curious, astonished groups, seeing the gay equipage and taking in its wonderful details, then scattering and running on, up and down the street, to tell it all in various homes.

The nearer homes await no telling; the news has announced itself.

Nobody had pulled up a front blind. The windows of the best rooms were blank, the doorways were indifferent; but from behind the curtain edges the housewives who would not stare had peeped and wondered, watching from every little while to while, between the turning of their steaks or bacon, and dishing up of their potatoes, and later during the washing up, to see what would come of it; what would be done with the "team," how long it would stay, and who would go away at last.

"Do you s'pose she's come for the gurl?" Mrs. Speering was asking of her spouse, to whom she reached his midday bowl of tea across the table.

"I don't s'pose. I leave that to the women. S'posin' never alters nor settles anything; news is bound to come along in time, 'n' it don't alwers signify, neither. I c'n gener'ly wait, 's well 's not."

"'Less it's fer your dinner — or the 'lections. News ain't news when it only comes *afterwords*," replied the lady, unconsciously pronouncing a pun. "I like a little inklin', all to myself; 'n' so do you, — only you won't never talk it over." Which undoubtedly

may be the true masculine and feminine of that interest in affairs commonly set down as gossip.

Meanwhile the gray horses waited; the stately driver sat statuesque upon his box; there were deepening hoof-holes in the soft turf close before the gate; inside the house was commotion of suddenly broached plan, flurried consideration. Miss Esther Charlöck was put about, irresolute.

"Let's have our dinner, anyhow," she said. "You'll have to make out with what there is, I guess; but it's hot and ready, and better now than 't will ever be again."

So the horses and the coachman were sent round to the old Stillwick tavern, and the two aunts, with their jointly appertaining niece, sat down to these few excellent things: a spider-cake, newly taken from the fire in its perfection of light crispiness, split and buttered; a square of broiled salmon, delicately done to an even outside brown and an even inside pink; a dish of dried-apple sauce, stewed with orange peel; a rhubarb pie which had been meant for Sunday (Friday was Miss Charlock's baking day), and a little pot of steaming coffee.

Over these, growing comfortable, they discussed affairs more at leisure.

CHAPTER III.

BOILING UP, AND SIMMERING DOWN.

"You 've come down upon us almost like a hurricane," said Miss Charlock, handing a cup of coffee to Mrs. Clymer, and beginning to help the broiled salmon. "Estabel, just dish out the apple sauce, will you?"

This was evidently to give the girl other occupation than that of looking from one to the other of her aunts with rapidly distending eyes. She took the spoon that was placed beside the sauce dish, scooped with it a big piece of butter from the pat upon a plate close by, and was about transferring it to the glass saucer set for the apple, when her Aunt Esther stopped her.

"What on earth are you setting out to do with that?" she exclaimed.

"I don't know. I don't seem to know what's going to be done with anything. I seem to be helped round myself, pretty much as it happens," returned the girl, half laughing, half ashamed, dropping her hands into her lap.

Miss Esther laughed too. She enjoyed the child's bright ways, inconsequent and perplexing as she was. In truth, she did not at all like to give her up.

"You 'll know as soon as it gets straightened out," she answered. "All that *I've* come to yet, is that my sister-in-law-in-law wants to take her turn with you. You're to go to Tophthorpe—I suppose."

"When it all gets round to me, shall I have any say about it?" asked Estabel demurely.

"That 'll depend. I don't know 's you will, and I don't know *as* you will."

When Aunt Esther tried to be antithetical, she was very apt to be repetitive. She had no impediment of speech, but she labored under certain lapses of construction.

Estabel turned to her other aunt.

"When, Aunt Vera?" she asked.

"Why, to-day, I thought. But Aunt Esther seems to think it too much in a hurry."

"Of course it is," put in that lady. "It's like a ball rolled in among a lot of ninepins. Everything goes every which way. There's her new gown to finish and all her things to look through—guess it will be looking through considerable, with the holes and tears; and they'll be all round the lot, as usual; and there's a decent good-by to say. We don't send round cards here in Stillwick. We were going to Henslee Place to-morrow."

"Oh, *were* we, Aunt Esther?" Estabel exclaimed impetuously.

"I was *aimin'* to," Aunt Esther answered dryly. "You'd have known when my mind was made up."

Aunt Esther's mind was never open to inspection in the making. Half her annoyance at the present moment was that she had been surprised into the process, and that it must be carried on in public. She liked leisurely considerations, and decisive acts or announcements. "Put your needle in deliberately and then pull the thread as smart as you please," was her saying as to any kind of work.

"Whether or no," she went on, turning to Mrs. Clymer, "Estabel ought n't to go away without a word. Lucy Henslee would n't like it. Let her wait through the fore part of the week. It's likely I may go up to the city by Wednesday or Thursday. Monday and Tuesday are my easy days in the shop, and I can attend to fixing her up. Other times—there's the bell this minute! All creation—and Electry Speering—will

be in, now you're here. I never know whether my soul's my own."

And Miss Charlock set down her cup of coffee, which she had held poised before her lips while speaking, pushed back her chair, and hurried out of the room and across the little passage to the door that opened down two steps, into the shop behind the counter.

"I wanted you to go back with me," said Aunt Vera to the girl. "There'll be plenty to do there, too, to get you ready. It's the last of July, and school begins in September, and I want you a while first for a number of reasons. Besides, when I set out for a thing, I do hate not to carry it through. But I suppose we must n't worry Aunt Esther."

"Am I going to school, Aunt Vera? In *Topthorpe*?"

The near future was rearing itself in successive ranges of high expectation, in the suddenly opened vista before Estabel's vision.

"I began to think it was high time," returned Mrs. Clymer. "You must have got pretty near through with all you can do here in Stillwick. Sha'n't you like it?"

Estabel gave her an unexpected answer. She jumped up from her seat, rattling her knife and fork off her plate to the floor, rushed around the little table, to the serious threatening of the entire arrangement, and threw her arms around Aunt Vera's neck.

"Like it? You dear aunt! What else could I do but like it, — being dug up and brought to life?"

"Now what?" demanded Miss Charlock, reëntering in time to hear the ghastly comparison. "I suppose the entire cat is out of the bag, by the yowling and clawing. You'd better go back to your seat, Estabel, and simmer down."

Estabel slipped back to her chair, pushed away her plate, laid one arm, rounded out, upon the table, and planting the other elbow beside it, made a saucepan in dumb crambo, by thrusting the hand up at a slant;

then she put her face down into the hollow, and began a bubble — bubble — bubble, — plop, plop, — like a furious boil, between whose ebullitions she appealed pleadingly: — “If you don’t — bubble — bubble — stir me up, — plop, plop! — I shall — bubble — bubble — bubble — boil over! I can’t help it.”

“I guess a good shake will do.” And Aunt Esther came to the rescue, seizing the illustrative saucepan handle, which she switched to and fro vigorously. “Hush up!”

A mingled laugh and gurgle and soft hiss, dying down to silence, obeyed.

“Take me off, Aunt Esther, and pour me out! I mean, pour yourself out! Tell me all about it.”

Her eyes shone with pleasure and fun, as she lifted her head and looked from one aunt to the other.

“Behave like a reasonable being!” ordered Miss Charlock, in sublime displeasure.

She would not be amused with this. She was hurt at the child’s delight in leaving her.

Estabel’s eyes changed their look. “I’m sorry, auntie,” she said. “I was only coming round by degrees, you know, as I thought you wanted me to. I’m all simmered down — really and truly. I could n’t help being glad; and I could n’t realize both ends at once. But,” she whispered, laying her head against Miss Esther’s shoulder, “I did n’t mean that there were n’t any good times with *you*.”

“Well, that’ll do,” said Miss Esther, putting her off, with a slight but not unkindly repellent motion. “Everything’s an experiment. You’ve come back before, and you may again.”

“Cats — and bad pennies — always do. I shall not forget the way, Aunt Ettie.” And as if to leave a break, to paragraph the conversation at a new point later, she went off out of the room.

“I don’t sometimes feel positively sure whether that

child is five years old or fifteen," said Miss Charlock to her sister-in-law-in-law.

"Or fifty," suggested Mrs. Clymer. "She's a queer mixture of baby and woman. She wants companions of her own age."

"Maybe," said Miss Charlock stiffly; and began gathering up her dishes.

Estabel rejoined her in the kitchen, and helped her with the wiping up.

"You need n't go to imagining, and then getting disappointed," said Miss Esther, after a brief dignified silence "over the teacups." "You're always trying to walk on moonshine. You don't understand common facts. You think things are when they ain't, and when they ain't you think they are."

"Yes, auntie," said Estabel demurely.

"How do you expect to get through the world that way?"

"Pretty well, I guess; if I don't ever think things ain't when they are."

"You do. That's what I said."

"I thought it was what you said n't."

"Chooty — choo! You're always quiddlin'. But I know what I mean."

"And so do I," said Estabel, throwing her arm and a damp towel, suddenly around Miss Charlock's neck. "You mean to be real good to me, and you don't want me to be unhappy. I shall never imagine the wrong way about that."

"Maybe you'd better go back to your other aunt now," said Miss Charlock a little unsteadily. "She'll wonder what we're consultin' up."

Estabel snapped a little kiss under Aunt Esther's ear, and departed.

Aunt Esther picked up the damp towel, and dabbed it across her face.

"It's as good as all over now," she said. "It had

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to come. I ain't complainin'. Only she don't know; I did n't hardly know before, myself. She'll grow to it, and look back; that's what we're all doin', all our lives long. Seems to me we're on the fore seat of the coach the whole journey. Once in a while it's apt to make folks feel squeamy."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HENSLEES.

It was settled that Estabel should remain for a few days longer at Stillwick, and that on the Wednesday or Thursday following, Miss Charlock should bring her to Tophthorpe in the stage.

"I must have gone before long," Miss Esther said, "and it might as well be then. I want some lining silks, and dress buttons, and woostids. I'm all out of shaded greens. Yes; I'll be along by Wednesday, or Thursday at the outside."

Mrs. Clymer had to be satisfied.

It was before the days when every little outlying village had its hourly train by steam to the metropolis. Stillwick lay apart, between two of the great railroad ribs that intersected the State; in a lobe, as it were, of the leaf so clasped together by the iron skeleton lines. It was a good while before the slenderer network of country roads and pikes was replaced by the branching reticulations that cut across everywhere to-day, in wonderful, confusing simplification of consolidated systems. The twelve miles between Stillwick and Tophthorpe were traversed in and out, morning and night, by the street car antetype, the long omnibus, still called "the stage." It held fourteen. Even so, it was rarely full. It is difficult for us, who can clearly remember these things, to realize that our own lives cover all the quickly succeeding changes from the heavy coach for nine inside to rapid transit over the same roads every day for thousands by the electric wave.

Estabel would far rather have gone in luxurious state,

in the open barouche, for the long drive through the Marsden woods and the sweet azalea swamps, and over the long bridge into the quiet end of the big city, — it was n't so very big, then, except relatively, and that way is n't so very much bigger now, compared with Greater Everything; — turning off along the pleasant river thoroughfare into which Mount Street and its parallels ran down, and arriving grandly at the very door, — than to go pitching and racketing all the way in the long, covered-up, musty stage, with her feet in the straw and her back to half the prettiness along the road, and then have to keep on down the Bridge Avenue, to the business heart of Tophthorpe.

But Henslee Place was a heavy weight in the other scale; and she had no choice about it, either.

Henslee Place lay upon the other side of the wide piece of woodland across the brook. A near bit of this woodland belonged to Miss Charlock's modest estate; just enough for her to cut firewood from without fear of absolutely clearing away the lovely shade; the greater part was the extension on this side of the Henslee property. The brook wound through the whole with charming bends, the path from the Charlock meadows crossing it twice.

The Henslee house was in that border of Stillwick which approached the bay, near the mouth of Stillwick River, into which the brook with its clear tribute presently ran.

Farther down was a shipyard, where in years past vessels of the early simple order had been built and launched for the then lively trade of the neighboring town of Peaceport, by the brothers Henslee, of the last generation, one of whom, the father of Colonel Henslee, had built also the generous mansion standing between the quiet country side and the busy shore. The uncle had never married, and the handsome double inheritance had fallen accordingly to its present owner.

The business at the shore had changed. The shipyard was no longer such, but had been long occupied on a lease of twenty years, as a lumber wharf. Colonel Henslee had so disposed of it, with the assent of his son, a prospering Topthorpe merchant; that gentleman's business having not yet grown to such dimensions, or taken precisely such direction, as to suggest including building combinations. "Everything may come round again in good time," the old colonel had said to him. "When the lease is up, Harry will be of age, and it will probably have come into your hands. Then you can together do what you think fit."

Secluded from both shore and village, in an open glade of its own little forest, the high road bending around it some furlong or more away, a private drive giving access thence, which wound on to join the highway again near Centre Village, the homestead house represented a certain old world dignity, and gave its name and consequence to the whole immediate neighborhood. The lower end of the town was called Henslee Corner.

From Miss Charlock's cottage to the Place there was a distance of a mile and a half by the open road, lessened to three quarters of a mile by taking the sweet woodway, which of course in summer was always done in walking. And it was only in summer that Miss Charlock ordinarily made visits to Cousin Lucy. So that perhaps only once or twice in a season Estabel ever had the pleasure of what was to her like walking into some charming dream or story.

The wife of Colonel Henslee had been a Charlock; and the Charlocks had been more proud of their side of the alliance than of the high state into which at the time it had seemed to lift the lady, for Eleanor Charlock had been a great beauty. Her father, Dr. Charlock, had a good practice in Topthorpe, but it was without special prestige or claim, by other than her own

supreme personal charm, that his daughter had been taken up into Tophthorpe society of the choicest, and there idolized; had shone for two brilliant winters, a star in the constellation of the zenith; had had her picture painted by A——, and visited in his rooms by continual crowds of friends, and of outside people who never saw her actually as there represented, — in her beautiful ball dress of pale green silk, shimmering, delicate, like young birch leaves in the early summer, and the clusters of violets in her sunny hair and among the laces on her bosom. The picture hung now in the great hall at Henslee Place; and before it Estabel Charlock stood and worshiped, in every possible moment of her rare visits.

Old Colonel Henslee was a feeble man now, past eighty; his daughter Lucy, who had had much of her mother's beauty in her younger days, and was now a gently faded, graceful woman of fifty, had never married, and was companion and nurse to her father, living with him in a quietness that seemed dead to lookers on, who wondered at her serene patience; but that was filled, as all true quietness under the hand of God is sure to be, with a peace and promise that are not for any eager bustle or successes of the world to give.

Lucy Henslee was a devoted daughter and a loving sister. The character and well-earned position of the Tophthorpe merchant were her joy and pride. He represented to her all the growing greatness of the yet comparatively young city, to whose growth, indeed, he contributed a strong force and a certain personal as well as commercial leadership. His one son, Harry, just out of school, where he had had the best practical education of the day, not choosing a college course and a profession, which were then held more distinct than now from a training and occupation in affairs, was in a counting-house clerkship with the solid, old-fashioned firm of Blunt and Sterne, neighbors of Henslee and Com-

pany on the same wharf; his father wisely determining that he should have the regular discipline of a good apprenticeship, with none of the possible or inferential advantages or indulgences of his own office.

The boy was a bright fellow of eighteen, the pride and pleasure of his Aunt Lucy, with whom he spent most of his holidays, having the run and freedom of the whole place, and all thereon and therein; this only representing what was likely to come to him in actual eventual proprietorship. It was a safe relaxation; the youth was clean and free of all more doubtful or dangerous divertisement.

Estabel and Harry had been good comrades in other years, when the long school vacations had brought him to Stillwick. Aunt Esther in those days had more often taken the little girl to Henslee Place; there had begun to be a difference in the freedom of visits since the young second cousins had got into their teens. There was a little complication of reasons for this, which bore instinctively upon Miss Esther's judgment without direct analyzing, and to Estabel would not be patent at all.

Miss Charlock perceived that her niece was fast growing up in one way, while in another and more important sense she showed only very uncertainly that she grew at all. It was not an advantageous time with her. It was better—more improving, Miss Charlock said to herself—that she should go to Henslee Place when only Aunt Lucy was there, and for at least a part of the day sit down quietly at her needlework with her two elders, or be allowed to read to them, which she did willingly and very well, than to keep on scouring the woods or paddling in the brook and fishpond with the tall fellow who had got out of school and round jackets, and into frock-tails and a store. Underneath was also a motive, — if that which was not permitted to move anything may be called a motive, — an instinct of re-

straint springing from a consciousness she did not care to define, — that some time or other, something might happen so, — or she might be imagined to be thinking that it might happen, — that a Charlock should again be mistress of the grand old Henslee house and its surroundings.

Estabel was by no means just yet in the phase of her girlhood which such possibility would be most likely to approach; she had "got ever so much to come to," Miss Charlock realized and often said within herself; it was wiser to keep her back, in her raw unformedness, from premature exposure to any outside judgment; which last reason, more specific than she would have allowed, lay secretly perhaps at the root of the whole argument. Miss Esther Charlock was a very good woman; she was also, as far as her light and experience went, a very judicious one.

For their present outing they took Saturday, usually a very busy day in the shop; but Miss Charlock had anticipated by extra industry, and all the trimmings and finishings she had promised for the week were accomplished and ready for delivery; and her neighbor and occasional substitute, Eliza Gillespy, would come over and sit behind the counter with her quilt-piecing, for which Miss Charlock gave her liberal privilege with the scrap-drawer, that held such richness of small ribbon ends and gown snips. Also there was laid for her in the corner parlor a nice little cold luncheon, — ham and bread and butter and custard, — with tea ready in the brown teapot, for which she could put a stick into the stove and boil water to brew for herself. The anticipation of all which rejoiced Eliza's heart, or some part of her economy close by.

Moreover, though she would not deliberately go prying round, — she was above all that, thank goodness, — she had a lively, healthy interest in whatever might casually be manifest behind the scenes; she loved her

neighbors' affairs as she loved her own, which was good Christian feeling, and honorably gratified by this intimacy of service.

Miss Gillespy was about to have a very important and delightful day, not the least bit lonesome, she knew; for her being there would bring more or less dropping-in company of her own sympathetic sort, and custom, she argued friendly, to the counter. She was indeed generously ambitious to make a good day's sale, and of this Miss Charlock was, on her part, comfortably aware.

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING WOOD-WALK.

ESTABEL was by no means to wear her best dress to Henslee Place. There was but one for her to begin with in Topthorpe; and there were too much woods and water, too much fruit shrubbery and orchard at Cousin Lucy's, to trust her in with choice apparel.

The best dress, — except one “veriest-best” silk, — was a pale fawn-colored chally, with delicate crimson and dark-green sprigs. When she wore this she was quite fine, but in an elegant duress. She was far happier in her French print, of a close-running brown figure on a white ground. Aunt Esther made her take a sleeved apron, too, to put on as might be needed.

Aunt Esther could not see everything, look the girl over as she would. Estabel had great dread of delays when pleasure was on foot. She would pin out of sight a pinnable rent; she would move with cautious quietness when the hem of her white skirt was not quite beyond suspicion; she would keep one glove in her hand until they were well on their way and she was admonished to put it on, because of a rip which she might have been at the last minute sent upstairs to mend. “You never see Cousin Lucy with a rip in *her* glove,” Aunt Esther would say.

Aunt Esther had learned to be wary of unusual sedateness.

“What is it *this* time?” she demanded, on the Saturday morning when they were leaving the house, and Estabel demurely kept behind her, instead of dancing

along down the field. She had already discovered a long opening in the seam of a stocking, and had sewed it up with the leg across her lap, while Estabel, only half dressed, stood stork-fashion, with excellent poise and entire composure.

"There's *something*, yet," declared Miss Charlock.

"Oh, no, I guess not. I'm all right enough." And Estabel chasséed round in front of her aunt with a prancing curve that kept her face to face, and skipped backward, lifting the skirt of her frock above the immaculate ruffle of her petticoat. But there was a pin behind in the placket-slip, which would otherwise have extended far toward the hem.

Estabel was not willfully deceptive; she was curiously frank and truthful, when brought to the question, in anything essential; her ideas of essentials were different from Miss Charlock's, that was all; she really thought her way of repairing mishaps was as good as any, if she could only be let alone. She was always quite confident of her little defects being secure from ordinary observation; the only thing was to escape a military inspection. Estabel had not come yet to that deep-reaching, inclusive development of the truth actually in her, which in after life made her precise and orderly to the most hidden stitch and the innermost corner. Truth and thoroughness had not revealed to her their beautiful identity.

"You *won't* be all right enough, if you don't look where you're going, and keep on the path," returned Miss Charlock, as at this moment they came to the crossing of the brook, and entered the wood-hollow. And Estabel obeyed, falling behind again; for it would not be well to brush too carelessly against a bush, or risk the losing of the one small pin, which was all she had been able, in her hurry, to find. It would be terrible to have to turn back now.

The wood-hollow was lovely, — full of ferns, and low-

running vines, and catbrier climbing and tangling among elders and young birches; tall pines and hemlocks springing in fine upward parallels and making charming vistas that unrolled their changes at every step through the apparently endless reaches of forest growth, not dense enough to be impenetrable or gloomy anywhere; underfoot, the crisp or velvety mosses, the brown pine needles, the shining little creeping vines; the summer sunlight glimmering down into aisles and recesses above which lifted the far, still arches of the blue; across these, here and there, a white cloud floating; a veery sending its sweet, pathetic warble from some unseen height; a savanna sparrow lisping his "sip, sip, sip," from the brushwood of a warm hollow; a peewee thrusting his sharp little reiterated two notes persistently across melody or silence; along with the rest, more or less distinctly as the path wound near or far, the happy tinkle of the brook, making its way onward like a living hope, into things unknown but great and sure; — all these made up a parable of deliciousness and immediate satisfying and unstinted promise to the young heart so freshly in tune, with strings unslackened and unstrained, which carried the young feet along so lightly, that keeping after Miss Charlock's heavier, slower step in the often narrowing way, they could but lilt and spring, unseen, in relief of eager, undemanded energy.

It was a rapture of sameness — a sameness that might have lasted the day through without tiring — the sameness of a quiet ecstasy.

Estabel was gladder in it than commonly; she had something in reserve. One pleasure is intensified by another on its certain way; she had a new delight in her own life to match with the jubilation of bird and brook and growing green; a pervading sense, subtler than sound or sight or smell, identified itself with tones and things and fragrances; something freshened and perfumed all her quickened feeling; it was that she, like

the trees and vines, was at last to grow, and come to be what she was meant for, — like the birds, to sing her own life-song in freedom and sunshine; like the brook, to go on and find other haunts, nooks, openings; to get into the great, brave River at last!

She was going to Tophthorpe. That meant going to learn, to enjoy, to have things happen; it meant seeing and knowing what was in the wise and gay and grown-up world beyond Stillwick; beginning to grow up, herself, and of course to be wise and gay and busy.

It meant, first, and delightfulest with near delight, being among others like herself; young with the young; with *girls, girls, girls!*

Estabel's thought was just brimful with that monosyllable. It kept saying itself over and over in inward utterance and secret hearing. The happy plural means so much to her who is of it in the singular, who is a part of the beautiful possibility that is half the human future. Girlhood means fun and friendship; it reaches forward and holds all the blessed dream of life, being itself its pure, fresh reënforcement. It stands for the nature which is the making of love and home and sweetness; the grace and beauty of bright social intercourse. It is the impersonation of the shielded purity, the gentle strength, to which a whole world looks for its sanctifying and best maintenance.

And the seeking of girlhood to girlhood in this opening promise of everything is the most exquisite sympathy of the woman nature.

"I am going to be a girl, among the girls!" Estabel sang to herself, all this sweet morning, in the wood-walk.

Ah, but there are girls, — and girls; as the dearest lover of them all must allow. The old world still lays its formative hand upon the new, for the better or the worse; the initial force may warp or straighten, but it is there; influence overlaps; history repeats; life and

motive illustrate themselves over and over; it is an old fugue tune, an antiphon; fresh voices catch up word and strain that are never wholly dropped; society begins itself again in the schoolroom.

Estabel was going out into the world; what it would be to her would depend upon where she would be able to take it. All there was here — beauty, quietness, suggestiveness of nature, room for happy imagination — was open to her. She supposed she was going from this into a like yet larger freedom; she might find she was coming up against certain closed doors.

There is a fairy tale in which the heroine sails to an enchanted island; its beautiful shore lies stretched in light before her; its banks are golden green, its flowers in their sweet splendor are as jewels; its trees wave majestic, tender greeting; under their arcades long natural avenues wind and unclose in grand, still reaches; from among them, distantly rise fair palace walls, and the doors of them stand open; she thinks she has but to disembark and enter into all. But as she tries to land, she finds herself against an invisible wall of adamant, through which the vision shines; the crystal barricade lifts itself from the water's edge to the very sky; not a bird, even, can fly over.

CHAPTER VI.

HENSLEE PLACE.

WHEN Miss Charlock and Estabel emerged from the forest path into the open pleasance about Henslee Place, crossing the brook at the edge of the wood over flat stepping-stones, and passed around to the stately front upon the lawn, Estabel relegated all else and different to a corner in her mind which she closed as upon a treasure, to be no longer handled at the moment, but kept for an after drawing forth and delectation. She reverted instantly to her childish delights; she had a whole day before her to be happy in, in the rare old way. Perhaps some instinct bade her to make much of it, lest it might not come just so again.

The very face of the old house was grandly hospitable, invitingly and amply gracious. A double flight of steps led up to the door, curving from either side past the bricked basement to the portico from which opened the broad hall; thence wide doorways gave entrance right and left to drawing-rooms, library, and dining-room; these communicating with each other through double arches with folding doors, flanking the wide chimneys. Between these double arches were shelves shut in with sliding sashes, filled, as fitted the neighborhood in case, with books, lovely china, or rare old curios.

Paintings, not too many, hung upon all the walls. The furnishings were simple but solidly dignified, ample in form and comfort.

Deep, luxurious sofas, wide window seats well cush-

ioned, low rockers, slight, graceful chairs of such workmanship that their delicate frames had lasted in their first perfection through three generations, tables of fine old woods, cabinets carved and brass mounted, round convex mirrors over the chimneys, silver sconces at the corners of the same, now, in summer time, huge Indian jars upon the hearths, filled with fresh greenery or tall lilies, or clouds of smoke-tree and honesty blossoms.

In the midst of all, to-day, and usually, Cousin Lucy, quietly busy at her work table with its swinging bag of fluted green silk and upper fittings of drawers and cunning side compartments. A little way off, nearer the window, in his easy chair, the old, old man who for more than fifty years had been the master; who, most wonderful of all to Estabel, had been the husband of that radiant woman who had never grown old, whose full-length picture filled that wall-space in the hall opposite the great staircase, and, as beseemed the mistress of the mansion, gave first welcome to incoming guest, as if stepping forward with most smiling grace through a gold-framed doorway.

There was enough here to dispel the new and present dream, and carry the young girl's fancy and delight back into what had been heretofore the one fair visible romance of her life.

They had seedcakes and some tiny glasses of Greek wine, while Colonel Henslee took his tumbler of hot wine whey and a biscuit; then the needlework came out, and the proper hour was spent in hemming cambric and thriftily "transferring" French embroidery to fresh delicate muslin, while Cousin Lucy read aloud from "Barnaby Rudge," and the colonel listened and dozed in his armchair, and the old clock on the stair-landing munched up the minutes with a dry, regular grind, like a cow cropping grass.

Then came the two o'clock dinner, timed by order of latest gentility, arrived at in long, gradual advance

from old New England habit, in which the mornings began with five o'clock breakfasts after an hour in field and dairy, and the chief meal was spread at eleven of the forenoon.

After that Estabel was free. The colonel took an acknowledged nap, and Cousin Lucy led the way out into the garden, whose border walks were shaded at near regular intervals by outside trees, while its inner square lay open to the sun. The ladies' parasols supplied all other needed screen.

The descent toward the garden from the house was by a flight of broad, shallow, semi-circular steps leading from the back portico to the carriage drive, which here passed, between fine level swards of grass, to the stables at the right. Directly opposite, beyond grass and gravel, opened the little white gate in the paling, which gave entrance to the charming inclosure. Within the fence a rose hedge divided to offer passage.

A tour of the garden was *de rigueur* in all visits to Henslee Place. One was always led to the left, down to the corner where the roses gave place to currant and gooseberry bushes, these lining the boundary till the next turn, where, like a relief of guard, began the raspberry vines, laden in their season with amber and crimson thimbles, whose clean hollows loosened themselves from their central cores at perfect ripeness, and dropped their pretty cups and balls in superfluous profusion upon the ground beneath.

In the great square of the middle garden were strawberry and asparagus beds, outlined by rows of tall lilies and sweet phlox, larkspur, hollyhocks, with mignonette and ladies' delights about their feet. In the spring there had been daffydownillies, tulips, and narcissus; along the inner edge of the upper path was a thicket of sweet peas. Reaching this upper path, and turning the third corner, you might pass along between grape trellises and a range of beehives on the one hand, and the

sweet peas on the other, to the rose line, and so down to the first entrance; or you might keep on, through a turnstile, to the great three acres of orchards, — cherry, and plum, peach, pear, and apple; the succession of whose fruit offered bounty the whole summer through, and into the golden autumn.

There were no "yellows" then, to blast the peach; the curculio had not taken the plum by eminent domain; the Porters and the summer spice-apples and the pears, the early russets and the gorgeous Baldwins came in turn and in perfection. Truly, the Henslee gardens were worth pilgrimage. One cannot but pause to recall in detail what now remains but in a fragrant tradition, like the legend of the First Garden.

It was the beginning of emancipation for Estabel, this after-dinner walk; it was almost perfect pleasure; but she was still in conventional restraint, behaving with a careful propriety in the staid companionship of her elders. The real joy of liberty was when their tour had ended, and they reached the house again, giving leave to the child to go her way among the bees and the butterflies, the birds and the breezes — "only to come back whole — if she could," as Aunt Esther charged her, not without sarcasm.

At such a moment the whole world was her own; life was round and complete; what mattered it for garment? She sprang forth into her privilege; the summer afternoon was endless; it would last till night; what can the years do more?

Into the beginning of this long, lovely period came to-day a surprise of good fellowship. As they passed down from the orchard behind the garden into the gravelled way, Harry Henslee met them, bareheaded, eager, his straw hat in his hand, fanning his hot face. He had walked from Peaceport, whither he had come from Topthorpe by the railroad. He was off duty early; his Sunday holiday at Stillwick was lengthened.

They welcomed him in; gave him cold chicken and bread and butter, and lemonade. Then the fatigue of the last hour was nowhere; it might have been a year ago.

"Come, Esther, we'll go down to the brook," he said. "Round through the orchard, and get peaches. No, auntie, I have n't time for pie."

Estabel had had peaches, but was right willing to go, either way; it pleased her that Harry wanted her, and that he would not wait for pie. "I know where the best rareripes are," she said. "And down in the meadow there are cardinal flowers."

So the pair went off, after deliciousness and glory.

The two women, left to their quiet, stole each a glance at the other.

One was wondering if the other "thought." The other was questioning if the one "liked." Each covered her own instinctive querying with an inward ignoring and hushing up, — her glance with gently dropping eyelids.

They talked about patterns for a new sleeve, and a recipe for elderberry wine.

CHAPTER VII.

PREDICAMENT.

THE brook ran quietly along here, through the level of the meadows, which it drained well, leaving them rich for their grass crops, but not marshy. It broadened out to a pond in a deep natural basin a little way on, at the foot of the slope from the Henslee orchards. A few rods farther still, at the outlet of the basin, a slight dam had been constructed, with a weir, to keep back the fish and stock the pond. Around the margin, the low banks held in their curves patches of green pads and sweet white lilies. Farther back, on each side, the first blazing torches of the cardinals were lifted up.

Harry and Estabel had come straight down to the brook from the orchard, along the side line of the garden. Here the stream was narrow; farther up were the stepping-stones by which Estabel and her aunt had crossed in the morning. Opposite, the fringe of the woods offered shade.

"We'll go over presently," said Harry, "and finish eating up our peaches. Then we can go down to the pond. I've got a raft there now; did you know it?"

"No. How superb!" responded Estabel.

Harry stooped down and put both his hands in the water, letting it run over them in swift cool ripples.

"That's to baptize away the touch of the hides," he said, as he lifted them out, and shook the bright drops off. "You don't know what it is, to get away into this, from the skins and the casks and the gunnybags, and from standing on the hot wharf, checking off invoices."

"I know what it is to get out into it from almost nothing," said Estabel. "I don't wonder you think of being baptized. I feel as if I were just born!"

Harry sprang across the narrow bit of water. "Can you do it, if I give you a hand?" he asked, turning round and stretching out the offered help.

"I can do it without," said Estabel proudly; and with a quick jump she was beside him.

"Very well — for so young an infant," he declared gravely. "But you've lost some of your peaches."

"I have n't as many pockets as you have. Of course they rolled. But there are enough safe yet," holding out her broad-brimmed hat, which she had tied up by the strings, gypsy-fashion, to serve as fruit-basket.

Her hair was tossed about her temples, where the new little locks were short, and the wind had ruffled them out of their straightness; even the braid behind was rubbed and loosened until its turns had expanded from their slender primness, and had a soft fluff upon them. The pale color glinted in the sunlight. Her olive gray eyes flashed golden sparkles with fun and happiness. Everybody — I don't care who — has pretty moments; this was one of Estabel's.

They ate their peaches, sitting under an oak; then they went down the meadow path along the brookside.

Estabel filled her hat with cardinals.

"Wait for the water lilies; they're better worth while; these always fade so soon," said Harry; and then, round a clump of water-birches, they came suddenly upon a coterie of the dainty things close in beside the bank, leaning their sweet heads this way and that among the broad leaves, and turning up golden hearts full toward the sun; or floating, sheathed in pink and olive, their waiting buds upon the still surface of the miniature bay.

"There is n't a much better place than this; I'll cut a crotched stick, and we can hook them in," said

Harry. "And presently we'll get round on the raft. Hello! it's over there on the other side! Never mind; you stay here; and don't get in. I'll go across and fetch it."

He ran back around the birches. Estabel stayed, and hooked the lilies by their long stems; presently she had her hat heaped up with a coil of them, the buds and blossoms peeping out and dropping over the brim. She had to tie the strings tightly across, to hold the treasure in.

Harry appeared in a few minutes on the opposite bank; he seemed to find some difficulty with the raft, which was partly bedded in the mud; the water in the pond was low. He looked about for a pole; Estabel understood his movements perfectly; just out of his apparent sight and reach, she thought she discerned, under some weeds and flags, the thing he wanted, which had been used as a rafting pole.

"Down there!" she shouted, pointing eagerly; but he had turned away, and was running up the hill, making for the orchard bars, which happened to be constructed of long, light saplings.

"What fun!" cried Estabel. "I must go and help!"

Back around the little birch copse she ran; measured with quick eye widths and distances, and found the place where Harry must have made his second jump. It was a considerably broader space than they had leaped before, but Estabel was not daunted.

A flat stone lay just under the low bank, at the edge of the water. "I suppose he did it standing, from that," she said. "I'll have to take a run for it."

She went back up the gentle slope, turned at the distance of a few yards, and started. She made a spring step to the flat stone, and another instant bound forward; but the impetus was broken, — she fell just short, and came down, scrambling and dragging, upon the slimy edge. Knees and feet entrained them-

selves in the strained skirts, which they held down into the mud. Front gathers gave way; a hook behind burst off; the loose placket fell apart; with a backward struggle that sent her heel through the hem, she got free, and picked herself up; but the gown was dropping about her feet.

"Bother petticoats!" she objurgated, gathering the wreck around her; "and the pin's lost!" There was only one pin in the world for her that morning, and it was gone.

She had to come out from the sheltering shrubbery, holding her unlucky garment together with a vindictive clutch. The front was stained and plastered with brown brook mud. She had left her hat with the lilies on the other side. Her pretty moment was in the past. The present was a very ugly one indeed.

She stood still where she was. Harry, coming down with a heavy pole across his shoulder, threw his burden upon the grass, and hurried toward her.

"I'm all gone to pieces!" she exclaimed, with absurd pathos. "'I met a fool in the forest,' she lapsed into quotation, "'a motley fool; a miserable world!' 'Motley's the only wear,' you see. — I jumped the brook again, and — the fool was near drowned in it. I felt like just staying there and 'weeping in the needless stream,' but that was n't the fool, you know, — it was the stag. Oh, I'm all mixed up! Don't be provoked with me!"

"Nonsense! What in the Lord's world did you do it for?" he demanded, after the man's fashion, ever since Adam, when a woman gets herself, and him by any implication, into a hobble. The ministering of masculine angelhood is so apt to be, in reverse order to that of the feminine, most constant in our hours of ease.

This time, no doubt, there was reason in reproach.

"You need n't swear!" Estabel retorted; and got

the better of him there; though if he had been older, and less a gentleman, he might have sworn more emphatically.

"I told you to stay where you were."

"I did n't."

"And not to get in." Here the lip muscles quivered, in despite of the sternness.

"I did."

"So I perceive. I hope you are pleased with the result."

"I'm satisfied, if you are; and I guess you must be, for it's proved you were in the right of it."

They looked straight in each other's eyes, and both laughed out.

It was a very prettily rounded little scrap; if they had been ten years older they could not perhaps have done it better.

"Where's your hat?"

"Over there, — where the rest of me was to have been."

"I'll go and get it."

"Thank you. And please, then, keep on up the other side of the brook with it. — I'm sorry, Harry, I've spoilt your afternoon."

"Oh, I don't care. I'm only thinking what the two aunts will say."

CHAPTER VIII.

I LIKE HER.

ESTABEL had plenty of time to think of that, as she plodded along the meadow, often hidden by the wild bush growth, and always keeping meekly in the rear of Harry's stride upon the parallel path.

The young fellow never looked around, but held a certain wary under-watchfulness upon her progress, without obviously using his eyes. A word or two of inquiry, tossed back over his shoulder, and an answer on her part, reaching his keen ear, were sufficient; for the rest, he concerned himself more manifestly in his care of the hat full of lilies.

Just before they reached the stepping-stones, Estabel stopped, seated herself on a dry hummock, and called out:—

"Go on, Harry, please, the front way; and don't hurry; I shall run round through the orchard, into the kitchen. Lauretta will put me to rights."

"O. K.! Your head's level," he called back, in boy vernacular; and sprung, with only one lighting on the middle stone, over the crossing place.

"*I* could have done *that*!" cried Estabel the incorrigible after him; and a laughing shout returned:—

"You don't need to add to this day's glory!"

He managed to give her twenty minutes' grace. In two more, Miss Charlock entered the kitchen.

Lauretta had basted up the slitted skirt, — her threaded needle being always handy in the hanging cushion over the dresser, — the front breadth was in

the tub, under her deft local manipulation, and Estabel sat in the corner of the settle, her damp shoes drying before the fire. An iron was already down upon the coals to heat.

"Well!" was the lady's restrained but comprehensive salutation.

"I got into the mud, jumping across the brook," Estabel stated concisely.

"You're generally in the mud."

"It's a muddy world. It seems to be the chief end of living to keep clear of it. I don't make out very well. But there's only one thing I'm really ashamed about this time. It would n't have been so bad if I had n't pinned up the placket-hole."

"Pinned up the placket? What had that to do with it?"

"I put my foot through, when I fell, and tore the hem out."

"Well, I hope you *are* ashamed," said Miss Esther indignantly.

The makeshift was to her, as Estabel knew it would be, the worst of the business. And now the worst was out.

"I hope you *are*; you ought to be. The sight you must have been!"

Miss Henslee stood in the doorway, just behind. "Hush!" she whispered softly. "Don't you *see* she is?"

For the color was up, painfully, in Estabel's face, and her eyes were bright with proudly restrained drops, for all her bravado, which kindly wise Miss Henslee saw straight through, to the fineness of her full confession.

"Lauretta will make it all right, I'm sure," she said. "And then you can run upstairs and tidy your hair, and come back into the parlor."

The girl jumped up, stocking-footed, gownless, hair

in a whirl, as she was; a funny picture, as such regarded, but with a heart in her face, as she came over quickly to Miss Henslee, and put her hand eagerly into that held out to meet her. "*I am* ashamed," she said; "and you're ever so good, and I'm *not* just a romp, and nothing else!"

"Chooty-choo!" said Miss Esther Charlock.

By which originally devised expletive it was Miss Charlock's custom to relieve herself of extra emotion of any kind whatsoever.

Estabel took a different tone when Harry Henslee commended her transformation.

"You look like a young lady again now," he said. If he had not held her young ladyhood in question, and thought admonishment deserved, he would not have said that, and Estabel knew it.

"I'm just the same, whatever I look," she answered bluntly. "And I don't see the real inside difference between jumping a brook to show you can be spry and spunky, and keeping quiet and nice, when you want to jump, to show you can be proper. It's all alike; it's all just putting on!"

Naturally, Miss Henslee and her nephew commented slightly, afterward, upon their young guest and the incident.

"She's very real," said Miss Henslee. "And that's at the bottom of even her odd pranks. I think she has a fine nature. I like her."

"I like her, too," answered Harry. "She's jolly and honest. But she ought to be smoothed down. She's rough and wild. Other girls I know would stare at her. She would never do in Topthorpe."

"She is going to Topthorpe next week," said Aunt Lucy.

"To stay?"

"To stay, and to go to school. She is to live with her Aunt Clymer."

Harry whistled. "Well, won't she have a time of it!" he ejaculated.

"See that she has a *good* time, as far as depends upon you, Harry."

"Of course. A fellow is n't going to be a sneak. All the same, it won't depend much on me. Those Clymers haven't quite climbed, yet, and — well, I hope she won't wish herself back again!"

Harry Henslee was just at the point of life and circumstance to be absorbent of manner and convention; at which point, and into which circumstance, Estabel Charlock had not yet arrived. She was extremely likely, if they came in contact, to rebuke a certain subservience in him to form and requirement, by her own willfully accentuated independence.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM STILLWICK TO MOUNT STREET.

ON the Wednesday, Miss Charlock and Estabel, having arrived in the Stillwick stage, and transacted the elder lady's business in the business quarter of the city, walked up through the quieter avenues beyond the Old Park, to Mount Street, reaching Mrs. Clymer's door at eleven o'clock, a day before, and hours earlier in the day, than they had been expected. Miss Charlock had fixed on Wednesday, and brought all so to bear, because the semi-weekly wagon, not then distinctly called "express," but only "Babson's," which did service in errands and cartage between the country village and the city, came in also on that day, and would bring Estabel's trunk. The stage had started at a quarter to eight; had come in at good pace over the almost level turnpike, having no "blocks" to encounter, no turns and twists across street rails to make, not even, as it happened, a "drawbridge up" to hinder it; and the passengers, themselves not delayed by thronged sidewalks and corners, or rushes at bargain counters, had a fair forenoon for whatever purposes had brought them.

So our friends stood, in the plain array Miss Charlock deemed fitting for the stage, and general "traveling," — she carrying in her hand a small old leather portmanteau, and Estabel laden with sundry dry-goods parcels, — under the marble ceiled and pillared porch which arched the entrance of 84 Mount Street.

The front door was opened to their ring by a manservant in a waiter's linen jacket. Black suits and

liveries were not yet an applied civilization. Notwithstanding the jacket, the personage had an imposing air.

Miss Charlock was stepping in; he put his uncompromising figure between her and the inner door.

"Who did you wish to see, ma'am?" Only the first and last words betrayed the underling. The rest, and the manner of it, represented the entire dignity of the establishment.

"Mrs. Clymer, of course. Is n't she at home?"

"I don't know, ma'am." And he made no further immediate demonstration. He was deliberately taking estimate.

Miss Charlock's righteous ire was roused. She was therefore, on her part, extremely composed and very deliberate.

"I suppose it is your business to know or to find out. Had n't you better go and see?" She spoke in a restrained monotone, with rising inflections. She could n't have been more English, if she had known anything about being English, and had tried.

The man reached a little silver plate from a table in the hall behind him, and held it out to her.

Now Miss Charlock was not absolutely unsophisticated. She knew what she had a mind to know. But there was in her something of the same lineal humor of irresponsibility and sharpness which in Estabel had not yet been subdued to all ordinary decorums. For "Charlock" is wild mustard.

Aunt Esther gravely took the plate. "Thank you; what is it for?" said she.

"Your card, if you please," answered the man, not quite apprehending whether to be amused or rebuked or further insolent.

"I don't carry cards. I don't advertise," was the astonishing reply.

Estabel was laughing undisguisedly. This was great

fun. Between the two, the servant could find no clue for his appropriate behavior.

"It's your name I want, ma'am," he said, with non-committal doggedness.

"I don't see what it can be to you. I'm expected. Chooty-choo!" said Miss Charlock.

"Thank you, ma'am. I could n't go up without it."

And he departed through the house to the region of back stairs, leaving the visitors in the vestibule.

Either at puzzled first hearing or on the way, he confounded the difficult consonants.

"Somebody to see you, ma'am, below — Miss Judy Kew. She says she is expected. Some kind of a shop-keeper, I think, ma'am," he announced to Mrs. Clymer.

"Miss Judy Kew! Expected? Why — oh — is there a young lady with her?"

"Yes, ma'am — at least — well, ma'am, I really could n't make them out at all."

"The persons I expected were my niece, and — the relative who has had charge of her in Stillwick since I went away."

Mrs. Clymer explained matters with a quite beautiful self-possession, which put the whole subject at once beyond inferior surmise or criticism. Mrs. Clymer had a really fine way with her, when she could hold herself positively. She carried over a tone she had noted and admired, in books or her higher practical contacts, to lesser practice with great success; she was a good understudy; on the actual stage in grand performance, she could not always maintain her bearing and composure; she was too apt to relapse, instinctively, into receptivity and observation.

She impressed her servant. He said, "Certainly, ma'am; excuse me; the lady did n't quite — elucidate." And he retired from her presence, to retrieve, as far as possible, his blunder, devoutly hoping that the entire preliminary interview might not transpire.

Downstairs, a little later, he gave his own version, to the amusement of the maids.

"Of course, the best of folks may have their country connections," he admitted loftily, in conclusion. "But you can't tell just what to do with 'em, when they come upon you sudden, and don't show their references."

Meanwhile, in the hall, Estabel had her fun out. She sat down flat upon the floor, the instant the august functionary was out of sight, and rocked herself back and forth with glee. "Oh, I should just like to *roll*!" she cried.

"Get up!" commanded Miss Charlock indignantly; and the girl obeyed with the agility of an acrobat. For keeping still, that was another matter. She skipped along, on tiptoe, over the thick, soundless carpet, peering through the open doorways into the sumptuous rooms. In the next three or four minutes she had done more darting and flitting, and to more purpose, than a dragon fly or a bumblebee would have done, imprisoned in her place.

"Why don't you come in and sit down, Aunt Esther?" she asked, pausing at last on the threshold of the drawing-room, looking inward. Aunt Esther had not dared to speak while she was farther off, for fear of making matters worse.

It was at this instant that the discomfited official in the white jacket, approaching from the distant vista of the background, perceived, as he supposed, that his tardy civilities would be unnecessary, and willingly retreated.

But Miss Charlock remained unnoticed in the vestibule, motionless and resolute, like an elderly feminine Casabianca, until legitimately relieved.

"Come back here!" she said, in a stern, strong whisper, to her errant niece.

Estabel came back, and repeated her question.

"Because I know how to stay put — when it suits me. And don't you offer to step inside again, either."

Undaunted, in full enjoyment of the situation, Estabel started fresh inquiry.

"Aunt Esther, do you suppose that can be the shop out there?" she demanded, nodding backward to the extreme bound of her rapid explorations, where some corner gleams of the gorgeous glass and porcelain department were visible.

"You'd better ask your other aunt," Miss Charlock answered grimly, but with a curl at the corners of her lips like a baby's when its chin is tickled.

And at that moment the other aunt appeared at the head of the long staircase, and came down.

"Out here!" she exclaimed. "Why are n't you in the drawing-room?"

"The gentleman did n't invite us any further," returned Miss Charlock.

Mrs. Clymer snapped down the latch of a wall bell vigorously. The white jacket reappeared.

"Take these things to the front upper room," she said severely. "And have lunch upon the table at twelve."

Anything like the bow, which included the three and was accompanied by a quick glance of deprecation to the newcomers, had certainly never been seen in Stillwick.

"Archibald did n't understand," Mrs. Clymer remarked slightly.

"He appeared to think he did," returned Miss Charlock. "But it was n't of any consequence. I suppose you have all sorts of folks coming to your door in the city." The quiet indifference with which she accounted of herself as among the indefinite all sorts of folks was sublime.

Mrs. Clymer dropped it there, accepting the "no consequence" with a smile; making haste to inquire at what time they had left Stillwick, and how early Miss Charlock would be obliged to leave Topthorpe for her

return. "Our dinner is n't till four," she explained. The Clymers were ahead in this march of custom also.

"That's most my tea time, generally," said Aunt Esther. "But the stage don't start till half-past three. — You've got a pretty complete house here, sister-in-law-in-law."

She would not, for the value of all Mount Street, have been guilty of the mistake of seeming purposely not to notice, any more than she would have noticed too effusively.

"I must take you round presently," said Mrs. Clymer, with graciousness. "But don't call me by that long name before anybody, please," she added, laughing. "*Cousin-ing* is old-fashioned, they say. People don't call each other by relationships; but *that* would need a whole family Bible to unriddle every time!"

"Oh, I didn't know. I'll bear it in mind. It would be a good deal of trouble, of course, to have to settle everything by the Bible," returned Miss Charlock meekly. There being no immediate remark upon that, she went on: "I guess likely Estabel will have considerable to find out, before she gets the knack of things, even if she reads her Bible every day, which I hope she will. She'll make mistakes, and you'll have to make allowances. She thought just now your china closet was Mr. Clymer's shop. She's always been used to a shop opening out of the front entry, you know."

It was a remote comfort to Mrs. Clymer that the stage would start at half-past three. What might happen between now and then she dared not contemplate. She need not have been worried. Esther Charlock understood the last refinement of aggravation. The thing threatened is a great deal worse than even the thing done. If she had not known what to refrain from when the time came, she would not have known how to terrify.

Mrs. Clymer continued bland and hospitable, serene in her own superiority, even if apprehensive of the in-

aptitudes of others. She took her guests to her own room to lay aside their bonnets, and then around from that to others, and downstairs again, through all the extended show that Estabel had only peeped at.

The young girl accompanied and followed silently, taking seriously her new bearings, grasping readily enough her new situation. It did not seem, after all, unfamiliar to her. Nothing is really unfamiliar to quick young eyes or impressible young fancy. In five minutes she felt already "used to things." Her large imagination had not been given her for nothing. It fitted itself to whatever of grandeur or luxury might be presented. It had made grandeur and luxury out of utmost simplicity. Now it would make matter of course, of the unlimited and splendid. It is well that we can all go forward of ourselves in such wise. Else how can we pass at last from earth to heaven without being confounded?

Estabel was as ready made as her aunt's house and furnishings. But the ready made, she was to learn, is not the really made at all.

She delighted in those externals which so lavishly seemed to express about her the richness of life; it was with a new delight, different from her pleasure in the field and wood, different from the sedate satisfactions of the old Henslee manor, with its sober plenty, its measured, proper indulgence. This was an Arabian Night's dream, in which her picture-nature could revel; the instinctive desire in her was met, her delicious ideal represented in substance; she could see and touch and use the signs of it; she could be here as a princess in a palace.

She longed to be all alone, to take possession; to walk up and down these rooms, in and out their stately communications, just as she had walked up and down among the bean vines and the corn, only with the imagination in her set free from the transforming of place

and object, to the building up in the actual surrounding wonderful stories of a new, real life, intense within her now, to be realized in further circumstance and detail, she never doubted, as the time went on.

Aunt Vera thought she was impressed and shy because she did not speak. This flattered her; but if she had looked deep into those glowing eyes, if she had searched the subtle underplay of fine muscles about them, and the secret flutter of an unloosened smile about the closed but gently curving lips, she might have guessed something which she could not fully know, because of the want of real poetry or fancy in her own nature. Mrs. Clymer was "practical," as she often said of herself; she went as far as literal facts went, or she could make them go in the direction of her desires, — no farther.

"She looks bright, and she will get accustomed," thought Aunt Vera. "I am glad she does not stare and exclaim."

Aunt Esther thought that perhaps the child was sober because she was feeling the good-by to herself and the old Stillwick life.

There is a world — a moving, urging, palpitating world — in every human being which the nearest never can quite penetrate. The Stillwick life was over, it appeared, truly; and here was another, altogether strange and different, not yet opened. In this small space of time between the two, Estabel was hurrying through the panoramic scenes of a whole existence, such as never had been, and never would exactly be. And the two aunts — the *deæ ex machinâ* of the before and after — sat close beside her and did not know.

At three o'clock Miss Charlock went. Estabel accompanied her to the door, and kissed her tenderly, clinging to her a little, with a hold that lay warm against Aunt Esther's heart long after. Then Mrs. Clymer took the girl into her own possession and led her away upstairs to the room that was to be hers. It was a

large chamber, looking out, happily, not on confronting brick walls, but across an open space between Mount Street and the next parallel. In this space were scattered trees, over roughly broken ground partly green with grass and weeds. It was such a piece of land as Tophthorpians still living can well remember, — a remnant of old garden or still more ancient pasture, marked out for eligible building sites, but not yet so appropriated. In the middle, a considerable round had been railed in, sodded evenly, and a graveled path made through, with iron posts limiting to foot passage an entrance at either end, at the top of two stone steps. About the little park ran a street way, passable, but not macadamized to its final smoothness. The rest was rough land, as beforesaid; there was room for perhaps six houses of generous proportions on each side. It was intended only for fine mansions, as may by and by appear collaterally to our story.

Exactly opposite to Estabel's window, over the nearer entrance to the Round, two elms arched the steps with graceful boughs. They made her think of the gateway at home. As yet, in her heart, Stillwick was home; Tophthorpe was an incident, a peradventure.

"Now you may dress for dinner," said Aunt Vera. "Put on something nice; the best you have, probably; we'll get more for you soon. Your trunk is below; I will send Archibald up with it in a few minutes. You had better let him put it here, beside the chimney; and here is a quarter you can hand him."

She laid a twenty-five-cent piece down upon a little table.

Estabel looked puzzled for an instant; then she understood. She had seen Aunt Vera do this with porters and servants when she had stayed with her at hotels. But this was not a hotel; it was Aunt Vera's own house; why did she not do it herself, if it need be done? She asked her why.

"I think you had better. There's no occasion for me. It will show that you — know what's proper."

She meant that Estabel, notwithstanding that peculiar first encounter, should take her position with the servants. To Aunt Vera's understanding of things, position was always to be taken with money, from a quarter's worth upward.

Estabel took up the coin, and put it back into her aunt's hand.

"I have some money," she said, "and I'd rather — *really* do it, myself."

Aunt Vera was not offended, but rather pleased. Here was the instinct of a lady, which something in her, apart from money, perceived, respected.

"That's very nice of you, my dear," she said kindly. "Only I mean to keep you in small pocket money, so we might as well begin. You may not have exactly the right bit. If you want help with your hair or anything, ring the bell, and Sarah will come." With that, she laid the quarter down again, and went away.

Estabel could not begin to dress till Archibald and the trunk had come, and the former gone. She took out her little knitted purse, and emptied some silver into her hand. There were a few dimes, half dimes, a half dollar, and a whole one. She selected the half dollar. "I'll give him that," she said to herself, "so that it shall be as much from me as her. Then for a while I'll let him bring me things for nothing. I guess he'll understand." Which was again the instinct of the inexperienced.

She slid her aunt's contribution out of sight behind a book, went over to a window and sat down, looking out again at the rough square, and the two elms over the stone steps.

"I shall make believe it is the country," she meditated. "It would be a nice place to go and sit with a book."

She had already turned her make-beliefs the other end round.

Archibald came with the trunk — not a Saratoga — upon his shoulder.

"Set it here, please, Archibald. Thank you very much." And the half dollar, neither exactly knew how, which was precisely as it ought to have been, was slipped into his hand.

"Thank you, miss, I'm sure. I hope you'll excuse — my blundering at the door."

Estabel laughed. "Oh, you were both very droll, — my aunt and you. I don't wonder you didn't either of you understand. Miss Charlock likes to mystify people sometimes. You thought her name was — Chootty-choo! Oh, what fun!" And her laugh rang full out, so that the stately Archibald ventured upon a smile.

"There's no mistake about *you*, miss. And if there's anything I can do for you of any sort, you've only just to say it."

He bowed to her from the doorway with his hand lifted to his forehead, and was gone. Estabel felt more like a princess in a play than ever. "*I dreamt* — that I — dwe-elt in — ma-arble halls," — she sang as she unhooked her gray debeige dress.

She had seen and listened to the "Bohemian Girl" three winters ago, when she had been with Aunt Vera at the Trepeake House, and the opera company was at the theatre right opposite. "Oh, what fun, — to *be* the Bohemian Girl!" she exclaimed, letting down her ash-blond hair out of its tight braid.

She laid out the fawn-colored chally, with its green and crimson sprays. She chose out of a little box of ribbons which Aunt Esther had supplied to her from the shop, — what joy to have, for once, all fresh ones! — a fine length of crimson satin; it would go so well with the little red flowers upon the dress. And indeed it

contrasted well also with the soft, pale color of her hair. She drew this away regretfully from her face, — a full light mass of shining strands crisped by the braiding, and falling like a shower of spun glass threads about her throat and shoulders. “If it only were the fashion to wear it hanging!” she said. But that fashion had not come round yet, and she gathered it into its accustomed relentless tidiness.

She had to ring for Sarah to fasten her dress behind.

“Will you please?” she said gently, for she was unused to ordering; and so unuse met unwittingly the extreme of highest habit. “She’s a natural lady, anyhow,” said handmaiden Sarah to herself.

“Is my hair nice behind, Sarah?”

“Very nice indeed, miss; only — if you would let me — there!” And she had loosened while speaking the locks that had been brushed back stiffly from the temples, and let them drop a little across the ear-tips. “That looks more easy,” she remarked. And then she pulled the loopings of the braid each way, until it was shortened and broadened to some pliancy and fullness. “It is n’t quite so much like a stick of candy,” Sarah said.

“You’ve got pretty hair,” she added, to soften the satire of comparison.

“Why, Sarah! I don’t think so at all!” cried Estabel in the most honest surprise. “It’s only pretty when it’s let out, and all anyhow.”

“That’s the way some *folks* is pretty. It don’t do to tie up hair — or people — too tight, and all alike. If you can be kind of car’less, — an’ not too much, — that’s the idear ain’t it?”

“It’s a very nice idea, I think.” Estabel carefully placed between her vowels the comma for which Sarah had substituted the lingual consonant. Perhaps the latter noticed this, and it suggested what came next.

“Would you mind, Miss Estabel, spelling my name S-a-r-a?”

"Why, what need shall I have to spell it at all?"

"Oh, only in your mind. It might sound the same, but 't would be a comfort to know you knew, and took that view of it. I can't ever bear names that have aitches put on at the ends; *Sarah*, *Hannah*, *Rebekah*, *Susannah*." She made the "a" very distinctly, "as in *father*."

"Now I think of it," said Estabel, "they aren't spoken alike. There's a picture at Henslee Place of a Madam Sara; and they always say it short, — both 'a's' just alike, — 'Sarrah;' that's the sound of it. Shall I call you so?"

"I guess that would n't fit on, now," she answered; "only, if you like, just between ourselves. I suppose other folks must go on pronouncing it wrong. But that's only because they don't know, and we do," she added, with a return of cheerfulness. "Do you suppose they called Lady Sara Roos, in 'Thaddeus of Warsaw,' 'Sarrah'? She was a horrid woman; behaved like sixty; but it was a lovely, proud-sounding, innocent way her name was spelt, if she'd only conducted herself accordingly."

Estabel found a comical sympathy in Sarah's fancies. She would like to please her if she could.

"I don't see why I could n't set the fashion of saying it short," she responded. And then, bethinking herself of Genesis, "There's another way, besides," she said. "Abraham's wife was 'Sarai,' you know; S-a-r-a-i."

"And a pretty thing she was, too, with her tricks and her tantrums; piling Hagar and the boy out into the old sandy desert! I don't want any of her. I don't think overmuch of Abraham, neither. He might have been respectable, for the times, but he lied, over and over again; and he wanted to kill his son. I like Thaddeus of Warsaw better."

"So did Lady Sara Roos."

"Well, there might be good Sarras; but Say-ray is dreadful."

"Sara! Is n't it almost dinner time? Must n't I go down?" She treated the syllables gently; it was just a light touch of changed accentuation. Sarah was delighted.

"Yes, miss. And good luck go with you. You look real sweet."

Estabel had at least won to herself two loyal retainers, in this her first day in marble halls.

CHAPTER X.

LETTERS.

MRS. CLYMER TO MISS CHARLOCK.

DEAR ESTHER, — I promised, I believe, when we agreed that there had better be no visiting for a while, to write you word now and then in regard to Estabel. Of course, until she begins to go to school, and make acquaintance, and go about a little more, there is not much to say. But at least I have nothing of great consequence to complain of, there being no fences here to climb, and no brooks to jump into, unless she tried the spiked iron of the mall, or the River Shawme, which at the foot of our street is pretty near a mile across. She has a genius for invention, however, and there is never any knowing what may come of it. It seems a hard thing for her to understand that the city is anything but, as she says, "the country covered up." Mr. Clymer was greatly amused at her definition, and Ulick North, who was here to tea, said it pretty much summed up the whole relation between civilization and barbarism. He says a good many clever things, but I don't know always exactly what he means.

Well, Estabel managed, the very first morning she was here, to find a place where she thought, I suppose, the country cropped out. Where do you guess she took herself, with a book and her garden hat, but to the gate of the Round, and sat down, as calm as you please, on the stone steps under the elms, just as if she were in your front yard in Stillwick! I saw her through the

blinds, and all our side of Mount Street might have done the same. Just think of it! And the gentlemen beginning to come out of their front doors to go down town! I was at my wits' ends; for it would n't do to call to her, and I did n't want to send, and fetch her straight across, to show everybody where the goose had come from. But Sarah Sullivant saw her, too, and she saved the situation this time. She's no fool. She went out the back gate, and down Filbert Street into Beech, and so around up Mount, and took her back the same way. For a mercy, the clotheslines were out, and the sheets hung, so the retreat was under cover.

I rang for Sarah, and gave her a dollar. She said she did n't want it, but I told her I would rather have given fifty than to have had it noticed. "What *will* the child do next?" I said. "Something bright an' *innersunt*, I guess, whatever it is," said Sarah. "She's as simple-minded as the Babes in the Wood, — or as Lady Godyvy, if it's proper to mention her. There'd be no need to be ashamed if folks was only enough like her to understand." I can see that Sarah is all ready to side — and maybe hide — for her. I told her to watch out, and keep her from doing anything wild and dreadful, if she could. She said, yes; but she guessed Miss Estybel was smart enough to go alone, and find her way, too, without much hindering, nor yet showing. She'd got the *lady* in her, and that was the main thing. So it is, but there are manners and customs, and the girl is awfully independent.

When I told her what a queer thing she had done, she just opened her eyes at me. "Why, what are things *for*, then, if they are n't to take comfort in?" she wanted to know. I said that people in the city had to take comfort in their houses; that trees and grass were to look at, out of window, or walking along; little children, with nurses to take care of them, might play in the squares; but to go and *sit* there, — a great,

grown girl, with a book! — “Well,” says she, with a long, hard breath, as if it was the last she expected to draw, “I’ve heard of being as big as all outdoors; but it seems when you’re fifteen years old, and in the city, you’re bigger. I think it’s terrible to outgrow the whole world, and have to be crowded into a crack between brick walls. I know now how that genie felt in the bottle. I don’t wonder he stretched sky-high when he was let out!”

She was n’t the least bit impertinent nor out of humor; she simply could n’t see.

Esther Charlock, it is n’t so much her manners we’ve got to deal with; it’s the very make and being of her. You see that before she will give in to anything, because it’s customary, she wants to go clear to the bottom of the custom, and settle the why and what for. You’ve got to explain the very foundation; to dig up the country from under the town. She wants to know “why people build their houses right up against each other, if they don’t want to be really neighborly.” “They have to,” I told her. “Land is dear in the city.” — “What makes it?” — “Why, so many people want to live here.” — “What for?” — “Why, for convenience; to buy things, and to get things done; and for business, and amusement, and improvement, and society. Everything is in the city.” — “But everybody does n’t have everything; and it does n’t look very sociable to me, when people can’t speak to you until they’ve known you always. How do they begin?” — So there she was, back into the creation. I only told her she would have to wait and see; that it was necessary to be particular, to keep society nice, where there was such a mixture. And then she wanted to know why they did n’t go out of it all, where there was plenty of room to be nice and separate. What did they want of a mixture, if they could n’t mix? — It was just a round and round; and when I asked her how they could have theatres

and pictures and music and lectures without the city to get together in, she began right over. — “But they are n’t together, except in a crowd; and I don’t believe they would need the theatres so much, if they could see into each other’s lives a little more, — did n’t keep all the window curtains down; and as to the pictures and music, they might have a whole world full of what those were made from, if they would only get out a little way, and look and listen.” — So I said again,

• “You’ll only have to live and learn. I thought you were pleased to come to the city.” — “So I was,” said she; “only *to* does n’t seem to be *into*. If I can find the into of it, I shall like it well enough.” — I suppose she would like to have the fronts of the houses all roll up, like drop scenes, and see the whole play in every one. When her own play begins, it will be different. The bell has n’t rung yet; she’s sitting outside of all that, too, with only the green curtain to look at.

I am getting her ready for school. That is, I’m getting new best dresses for her; I mean she shall take her old best for every day. I want her to appear well at the start, there’s so much in first impressions.

I’ll put in a pattern of her new silk. Everything is figured, now. But this is double-faced, and will turn.

Yours affectionately,

VERA CLYMER.

ESTABEL TO AUNT ESTHER.

DEAR AUNT ETTIE, — Aunt Vera asked me if I wanted to send any message, and I told her no. If it’s going to be writing for a while, instead of seeing, some of the writing is going to be mine. And I wish you’d take my letter down into the garden, among the beans, and read it there — if it’s a pleasant day when you get it. Oh, don’t I wish I could be let out! I’m not unhappy, either. Aunt Vera is good, and every-

thing is so beautiful here that I can't help feeling grand, and liking it; only there is n't any real bigness to it; it stops right in the things, as if they were stones in a wall. What a mercy it is that there's a sky over the world, and a sea rolling round it, and birds flying, and fish swimming, somewhere. I do so wish I could be in the fly, and in the swim. [Estabel did not know in the least that she was pre-inventing modern slang.] I suppose it will be better when I go to school, and that will be in three weeks now.

How funny it is to think that there are people in all these houses, built right up against each other, and looking across to each other's doors and windows; and that they go in and out, with latchkeys, or ringing a bell, and then the door shuts fast, and you see nothing more of them and never know what they are about, or what they care for. And the minute the lamps are lighted, the curtains are pulled down, and nobody ever sits in the windows, hardly. I think it is like the Catacombs! But then you have a lot of room for guessing, and what you guess about people is very likely more interesting than what you ever come to know. At any rate, it's all the fun there is in it. The comfort is, it can't be so at school.

It seems to me the people really do get brickwall-y, living this way. Aunt Vera took me with her one afternoon to pay a call just two doors down the street. There is a girl who lives there, just about my age. I've seen her on the balustrade, the next but one to ours. You can go on the balustrade, when you can't stay inside any longer, because it is at the back of the house. Though I don't see exactly what makes the difference, for there are yards and windows all around. It is only, I suppose, that there is no street, where people are walking past. There are grapevines, too, about our balustrade, and woodbines about hers, so we are shaded in, and can only just look over. I called

out to that girl one day, but I did n't dare speak *quite* loud enough, and she did n't answer, nor look round, so I concluded she did n't hear. Or perhaps that she thought her mother called her, for in a minute more she went back into the room. She is very pretty, and I thought I should like to know her. How do you begin to know people in a new place? I don't think she has lived there long, either; for Aunt Vera says the houses in this block are all new, and that they had come into the street since she did, and so it was her place to call.

Well, we went; and Aunt Vera sent up her card, — as you *would n't*, you know, the day we came here! Mrs. Chilstone came down in a few minutes, with her things on; she was just going out, she said, but she was polite enough just to *light down* on a chair, — you could see she did n't really settle into it, but seemed to sit on tiptoe, — and she and Aunt Vera said a few things while Mrs. Chilstone was putting on her gloves, about the warm, pleasant weather, and the nice breeze we had here from the river, and the way the Round was likely to be built up, and Aunt Vera hoped she would come and bring her daughter to see me. "Is n't Miss Chilstone at home?" she asked right out; and I thought Mrs. Chilstone looked a little odd and stiff, and she just said Yes, Corinna was at home, but she was expecting her music teacher; and with that she finished buttoning her glove, and almost got up, as if she were the visitor, and her call was over. So Aunt Vera and I came away; and it was half an hour after that when I saw Mrs. Chilstone walk up the street.

I am telling you all this because it seems so queer, and makes the city such a puzzling place; and I can't help hoping that if the kingdom of heaven is in a city, it won't be so shut up, and I don't believe it will, because the walls of it are clear precious stones that the light shines through, and the gates are never shut by

day, and there is n't any night. I guess that's just what it means, but I should n't have known it, if it had n't been for finding this so different.

I have almost done; only the rest, so far, about that girl, Corinna Chilstone, is that I met her right out here on the sidewalk, yesterday morning, and as we had been to see her, I thought I might show I remembered her, and would like to speak. So I smiled, and said, "Good morning;" and what do you think? She just said, with her lips nipped together so that I don't know how the words got out at all, except that they were so short and sharp, — "My mother does n't allow me to speak with strange girls on the street," and marched right straight along. Was n't I mad? And don't you think she was horrid? I shall have to stop here, for if I was to write any more, I'm afraid some awful words would get away from me on to the paper.

So good-by, and don't think I'm not having a good time because of these few things, that I feel better about now I have told them. Aunt Vera thinks it was all accidental about the short call, and that Corinna really did n't know me, and I should n't have spoken to her — without a card or something, I suppose.

Your affectionate niece,

ESTABEL.

P. S. — There are plenty and plenty of beautiful books here, and lots of lovely people in *them*, so I'm not so very lonesome, after all. I never *was* lonesome till I came where there are so many people. I am reading "Lalla Rookh," and it has pictures in it, and is heavenly. Only I'm always so sorry for that poor Peri.

MISS CHARLOCK TO MRS. CLYMER.

DEAR SISTER-IN-LAW-IN-LAW, — I see just what puzzles you about Estabel, and you'll have to do as you told her, — wait and see. I've been waiting and

seeing this long time, or rather waiting a long time and just beginning to see. If it will do you any good, I will tell you what little I've got to in making her out.

I believe I told you before, in some things she's just a baby, and again in others she might have been born grown up. Outside, she's bran new; inside, I most think sometimes she's old as the hills. Perhaps we all are, if we only get far enough into ourselves to find out.

What I mean is, that in what concerns manners and things, she's new; she isn't one of the sort that grows in the bark, but in the pith. She has n't got the touch with things that folks call tact. That's only the skin sense, anyhow; but it's all some folks ever have, so they make much of it. There's more to Estabel. She's got flesh and heart, and that's what she'll live in and understand by, when she comes to it and has her chance. *That's* only the outside of the inside, too, the real, deep inside is what the Lord only knows and gets at. It's the place where He's creating us. The flesh and the heart work out from it, and show what He is about with us. Nobody would be anybody without them, and so we shall always have them somehow, though we shall shed our skins when the time comes (Job xix. 26; Ps. ii. 26).

[Miss Charlock seldom quoted Scripture verbally, but she knew what she had found concerned her to know, and had chapter and verse for it, for her own use or the finding of others.]

One thing you'll have to remember, that the growing flesh of a little child is tender, and won't bear bruising. If it once gets sore and festered, there's no knowing what mischief, not to say perhaps corruption, might take hold. There's more than one way to spoil a child. Healthy flesh don't gangrene; happy hearts don't get out of kilter. Keep her bright and sweet and healthy, whatever you do. If you find you can't, send her back to Stillwick. She'll grow slower here, maybe, but the

best things don't grow in a hurry, nor in too rich earth; and being a human creature, she's bound to grow to something. If it was n't that you've a perfect right to your try with her, I should have elected to keep her myself.

I am much obliged to you for writing, and I hope you'll write often. When you think best, I shall be glad to see you and Estabel. I won't put in any message for her, as I'm going to write to her separately.

Yours truly,

ESTHER CHARLOCK.

Miss Charlock announced her purpose without question. She would not insist upon visits; she thought, herself, they had as well not be yet; but she meant to keep some unbroken link with the child. This was what she wrote:—

DEAR ESTABEL, — I don't know exactly what to say to you in answer to all you told me in your letter. I am glad you are n't homesick, and I don't believe you will be. There's too much for you to feel interested in finding out about, even the things that are partially unpleasant. It seems to me that it's just here; you're in a new outside, and outsides are different; but the insides, I guess, are pretty much all alike everywhere, because it's all one and the same world, and the same human beings in it. When you get used to the ways, you'll see through to what they stand for, and that's where you'll have a chance to choose. It's like learning a new language. I never did, but I know. The words are queer, till you get the sense of them, and then you see they mean the same thing as your own. Butter's butter, whether you have to ask for it in French or Dutch or English. I don't know about Hottentot or Esquimaux. Probably *there* there might be a difference in the butter.

But don't set your face like a flint against the ways, just because they *are* ways. There must be ways and manners. They're what folks understand each other by. We should be brickwall-y, sure enough, without them. And don't be in a hurry to run after people, nor to run away from them. Wait and see. And do mend your stockings, and not lose your pocket handkerchiefs, nor wear your gloves with rips in them.

That's all at present; with kind love, from

AUNT ESTHER.

P. S. — Mind and smooth out your bonnet strings, and don't tie them in ropes.

CHAPTER XI.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE.

MR. SATTERWOOD's schoolroom was a large parlor in an old-fashioned house that he had hired in an old-fashioned locality. It was a corner room, and looked out, with four windows, on the street, and into a courtyard behind. Back of the courtyard ran a broken ascent, partly green and partly gravel, around whose base new building was going on. This open ground was free to the scholars as playground.

Two long tables extended through the room, from before Mr. Satterwood's desk and the recitation benches, to the street windows. These tables were covered with green cloth, and surrounded by flag-bottomed chairs, in which the pupils sat as close together as reasonable elbow room allowed. Sometimes, of course, unreasonable elbow room was taken, and cause for dispute or appeal arose, as will always happen in an elbow-crowding community.

Mr. Satterwood had come from England, with high credentials and introductions. Topthorpe had taken him up, and the best families were sending their daughters to him. This parlor arrangement, rather than a bare schoolroom with common, hard desks, seemed a particularly private and happy one to the Topthorpe ladies who were here represented. It was the more of an ordeal to a stranger like Estabel, coming in alone, to face the cold inquisitiveness that glanced up at her, or the colder indifference that never turned or lifted itself from around those elliptic lines of select assemblage.

A whispered word had preceded her. It came from Corinna Chilstone, who had entered at the street door at the same moment with Mrs. Clymer and Estabel.

"She arrived in a barouche, with two horses."

"How silly!"

"So vulgar!"

"The barouche is shiny new, and so are the people. They live in our street, but mamma says she is sure she does n't know where they belong."

Mrs. Clymer had made another of her mistakes. She had chosen this morning to drive to Roystonport, to visit a friend, and on her way had brought Estabel round in state, to make a "first impression." The impression was made, and Estabel had an uncomfortable five minutes while Mr. Satterwood paused below to speak with Mrs. Clymer.

When he came upstairs, he called the school immediately to order, and assigned a seat to the newcomer. She found herself between two girls who drew apart to make room for her, whether politely or not was not precisely evident. One of the two looked pleasant, but made no sign. The other sent a glance, as if for a cue, across to Corinna Chilstone, who was directly opposite with hard, avoiding face, and who sent a look, like a grazing shot, carefully past Estabel, with a significant half smile. That smile, and the previous whispered word, were like the straw and the pebble which determined at the outset the trend of channel for the young human spirit that had its way to wend in a new strange countryside.

Another thing had been foolishly done, to add a ready prejudice. The "veriest best" dress was chosen for Estabel's first school wear; a "chiné," or clouded, silk, lilac and gray, with lace at the neck and sleeves, and a ribbon sash. There was nothing showy about it, — a modest little best dress enough, — but out of place and conspicuous among the gingham and French prints,

with which were worn the schoolgirl finish only of white linen cuffs and collars, and perhaps a black silk apron.

"It's Wednesday; she's all ready for dancing school," whispered one girl at recess, quite within her hearing. It was the girl who had got the cue of the smile from Corinna Chilstone.

"That's why she had to come in her carriage," returned a second, as the two, following their leader, passed Estabel through the garden gate, beyond which nobody invited her.

"Dancing school! Carriage!" she heard Miss Chilstone say over her shoulder, with a little sound too scornful for a laugh. "Everything's getting so disgustingly common. Do you believe Scalchi will take her?"

"Mr. Satterwood has. Did you notice, there's a whole new class, now, of 'common things'?"

The latter sentences had been beyond hearing, but the deriding titter came back.

Now a "Philosophy of Common Things" was an introductory text-book for the study of Physics. Four or five new scholars, among whom was Estabel, had been formed into a class for a morning lesson in it.

The witticism circulated. There was suppressed mirth when the abbreviated title was given in the call for recitation. Afterward, Mr. Satterwood quietly changed the word of summons. "Fourth Class in Philosophy" it became. And then, in the movement that followed, there would be a smile and a rustle around the second table, and a pantomimic "Common things, — common things," be passed from lip to lip.

A great American prima donna once told the writer of this story that a certain European people was the most cruel of all audiences to play to. "They have always treated me well," she said; "but I would rather make an engagement in any city in the world than —. They will pick up some little flaw of performance, or trick of personality, and make an insult

of it. I once played in —— with a fine tenor. His voice and style were perfect; wonderful for sweetness and control. And he was a gentleman; sensitive, too, as all musical souls are. It happened that he had a slight nasal utterance, in certain combinations of consonants; he could not pronounce 'Linda' clearly; the first syllable was, as we say, through the nose. That poor man could n't come on the stage in that opera, but the whole house would be watching, and then 'N-l-nda,' 'N-l-nda,' 'N-l-nda,' would run in a little low, mean mockery all through the auditorium and galleries, confusing his beautiful notes, and sometimes silencing him. It was a persecution; it forced the breaking of his engagement, and was the ruin of his whole year's work."

A school of girls, — or a few girls in a school, for they are but few, as they aspire to be, — may be cruel as Turk, or Cossack, or Spaniard, or wild, war-painted Apache Indian. And in those days there was a certain crude fashion — among the few, always to be understood in qualification — of being openly cruel. Quizzing and snubbing were done without disguise, as we read in last-century novels of their being done in aristocratic London. Everybody, now, of course, is a great deal too well-bred. If there is a sting, it is politely covered; if there is a cold shoulder, it is but turned inwardly, to an inward apprehension. "Tempora mutantur;" let us hope that the rest of the old Latin proverb is surely, if but gradually, coming to be the setting forth of essential truth.

Such small barbarisms seem scarcely worth remembering or recounting; but nothing is inconsiderable which gives bias to feeling and character; and these early experiences of Estabel's girlhood shaped very much her estimates of life, and were initial to much for her in its more important issues. In this intricacy of cause and effect and influence which by great and little determines our development, who shall say what is most vital and far reaching?

Estabel wanted friends. She wanted to have a good time. For that she had wished to be among girls. Here were girls; but where were the friends? where was the good time?

It is a strange thing, but practically true, that a handful of persons, old or young, arrogating to themselves privilege, can throw a whole community out of satisfying social sympathy. It is also a sure axiom that the masses do not know their own power. If they did, they could rise and assert themselves in their turn, — not by outbreak, not by insult for insult, but by quietly, and without reference to any, assuming for themselves; evolving their own possibilities, on their own open lines; mutually gravitating into a gentle order, and by as natural organization as planets group themselves in systems. No system fills the whole firmament; there is not one circle of heavenly bodies and all the rest chaos. Nobody, with a soul and a purpose, need be in chaos.

Whether the same independence might declare itself in the perplexing involvements of tangible, material interests, is a question that may not be solvable as yet by the enunciation of any inclusive principle of power in human action; but that morally and socially there may be a grand freedom and universality, an absolute ignoring and consequent demolition of cobweb lines of demarcation and hindrance, is as sure as that every human being is complete in individual potentials, and that there is room and relation for every one in the wide unity of the kingdom of God.

Life, at the best, is severe with us. It seizes upon us unawares. It demands of us what we have not yet attained. We never begin it fully equipped for the fight. We are plunged into the midst of choices before we have the heavenly or the earthly wisdom to comprehend or discriminate. Things determine themselves unfairly. If this is most eminently and disastrously

true where the little new human soul falls at its birth among the baser "thieves" of an open abuse and depravity, the fact confronts us also in a thousand subtle ways in finer circumstance. Frank, unwary impulses are trapped into mistakes, natural desires are hindered by their own simplicity, hope is thwarted in its advance by the very eagerness which anticipates a sagacious judgment and displaces a calm patience.

There are those who are born hedged in from coarse perils, who would be no stronger against them than the helplessness which falls under the compulsion or enticement of crime. There are those, as certainly, who are put from the start into assured, defended social station, where a little folly will be condoned, a passing blunder smoothed over, and no prestige or consideration lost; and who owe to this immunity a success which might otherwise have been mortification and failure. "One of us" cannot easily forfeit.

But, ah, for the young thing whose every little incautiousness is scanned, every inadvertence condemned, because of its fresh proof that of such is not, and cannot be, the kingdom of the elite! Truly, the little children are not all suffered to come and receive the benediction.

Estabel's experience at school made her at once self-distrustful and resentfully assertive. It made her at once too proud to acknowledge snub, and too sensitive to help caring for that which she endeavored to despise. She was full of contradictions. She was sometimes rude in reprisal, and again too amiable in conciliation. Some things she haughtily kept to herself which might have stood her in advantage; some others she let appear which were trivial and pretentious — these, because they seemed to her the things continually judged by, fitted to a trivial and pretentious apprehension.

"Don't tell anybody you're my — any sort of a — cousin," she said to Harry Henslee at one of Signor Scalchi's "Saturday evenings." "Let them think you

are just polite because you happened to know me a little at Stillwick."

For all that, the fact that Harry Henslee danced with her had its effect. He took her without hesitation into one of the top sets of the quadrille, where by tacit law nobody out of a certain charmed young circle presumed upon a place.

"Where did you ever know her?" asked Rose Alden, his next partner.

"At my grandfather's, Colonel Henslee's, in Stillwick," was the reply. "We are old playmates."

And presently, in the pause between the dances, Rose Alden, finding herself next to Estabel in the pretty side line of young girls, remarked affably to her that Scalchi had given them lovely music to-night, — two extra pieces; and she hoped a waltz cotillon was coming next. It was in the early dawn of the "german."

Estabel flushed up with simple pleasure. She had been so used to standing silent, or just slipping to Aunt Vera's side upon one of the chaperons' sofas. Rose Alden was not of the every-day Satterwood constituency; Estabel only met her here; she attended some other school, and was truly a girl as little tainted as might be by the miasma of her social sphere. Upon really high ground, the miasma does not so easily creep. Her little overture was quite uncompelled, and so the more touchingly gracious. Whether it would have occurred to her to make it but for that word of Harry Henslee's, is perhaps a needless question. So much of the best that is done depends upon a happening. To Estabel Charlock the act was that of a sweet little Samaritan, right out of a gospel parable. She would not presume upon such gentleness. She moved away a little, lest she should seem to expect more.

Estabel's old way of dreaming followed her in her new world. To really know girls like Rose Alden; to run with them in and out of their houses, — houses

• whose entrances she passed with a kind of wonder what it would be to pass freely in; to have it felt no intrusion to greet them heartily, to turn and walk with them, to make little afternoon plans with them as schoolmates do with each other; — these things, which would simply mean a nearness to that which seemed beautiful and choice, were the unreachd mirage that at once stimulated and mocked her realities. Her afternoons, when she did not drive out with her Aunt Vera, were for the most part spent solitarily enough, except for the companionship of books, and the innocent translation of the life in them to the fine, empty stage scene of her own surroundings. More and more she adored the possible but far-off poetry of existence; more and more she longed to attach to herself some little portion of its beauty; to move, in some simple measure, to its rare, sweet rhyme and cadence. In these days she had frequent deep consultations with her own mirrored reflection. "If I were only pretty — *very* pretty — I believe I could bear almost anything!" she would think. Yes; whatever befell, she would then be the lovely heroine in a real story; the passing details would hardly matter; a story, with a lovely heroine in it, is so certain somehow to come out right.

She did not tell her disappointments to her Aunt Vera. She knew what that lady expected of her, and it was a trouble to her, for that reason, not to accomplish it. And Aunt Vera was in a hurry.

"Why don't you ask the Arkleys here?" she would demand of Estabel.

"I don't know them well enough."

"You see them every day. Why don't you know them well enough?"

"I don't think they care to have me."

"*Why?*"

"Aunt Vera, it is you, now, that make an anger of your 'why,' as you tell me I do," the girl answered,

laughing; and would not be interrogated any more. "Let me open those wools, and hold them for you to wind," she said.

And Aunt Vera had reached near enough to her point not to care to drive her auger any deeper.

Estabel had a friend in the house, however, with whom she was more confidential. Sarah — or Sara — Sullivant was a sharp woman; not only sharp, but sympathetic — where she cared. And from the beginning she had cared for this girl, bright and sweet and natural, not made in the Tophthorpe mould, and plainly destined for many a pinch and rasp before she could be fitted into it.

It was to Sara that Estabel told her woe when she came home one day in the shame and rage of an unfair "deportment" mark.

"It was all that horrid Corinna Chilstone," she said. "She sat next me in the class, and turned her back to me — almost square round; and so I just turned the same way and put my slate up against her shoulders — we were doing dictation. Mr. Satterwood was at the other end, looking at a girl's 'dic;' and I would have taken it away directly, for I knew she would have to come back into position before he got near; but she gave such a mad shrug, and made it fall — bang — upon the floor, broken all to pieces. Mr. Satterwood does hate a noise, and he came right down upon us; and there she was, as calm as a clock and as innocent as a pussy cat, sitting as if she had n't moved for a week, and just looking up with her eyes rounded big in that surprised way at girls that don't know how — while I was picking up the shatters. 'Miss Charlock, how happened that?' said he. 'I got provoked,' said I, which was the solemn truth, and I let it go so. And she never said boo, but let him think I smashed it down in a temper; and he gave me a provisional 2. That girl is too hateful to endure!"

"What is a 'provisional 2'?" asked Sara.

"It's a mark that can be redeemed by the average of marks for the month."

"H'm! That's a good gospel idea," said Sara. "I guess he mistrusted more 'n you told him. A school-master's no business to be a fool."

"He asked me afterward what I had been provoked about, and I said I would rather not tell."

"Don't you worry. You'll everige all right," said Sara.

"It isn't that so much. Mr. Satterwood is fair. But I can — *not* bear — that — girl!" She spoke with long, emphatic dashes between her words.

"There's one comfort," said Sara Sullivant. "You only have to put up with *her*; but *she* has to put up with — the *devil*!"

Estabel stared, but took in at the same moment the fundamental principle of a Christian charity.

"Well, she does have the worst of it — perhaps," she said, and laughed, which was what Sara Sullivant wanted.

"I presume likely she *is* pretty much clear cat," said Sara again. "If I was you I'd let her alone, and see if I could n't find some butter."

"Why, *Sarra*? Cat! Butter! What *are* you talking about?"

"I s'pose you never heard that story. Well, it's a kind of a country parable an old lady used to tell that I knew at home in State o' Maine. An' it's jest as true in one place as another — the real true of it. Otherways, it don't sound very pleasant."

"Tell me the parable," demanded Estabel.

"Yes, I was layin' out to. You see, there was another old woman — so she said — that had a churnin' to do. And after she'd got it all ready and begun, she put a boy at it, an' went off on some partickler arrant she had. Well, the boy had an arrant, too, —

something connected with a pocket full of new marbles. So he churned awhile, — first with the dasher of the churn, and again with his hand in his pocket among the marbles; and then he took off the lid of the churn and looked in, and the butter had n't come. So he concluded to make sure of his own business, and give the cream a rest; and off he went, without ever putting the lid on; and the cat got in.

"It took him about half an hour to lose all his marbles, and then he came back in a hurry, clapped on the lid, and worked away for dear life at the crank, and churned up the cat."

"How could he?" Estabel interrupted incredulously.

"I don't know. That's the parable. I ain't responsible, no more 'n I am for original sin. The cat got churned up; that's the story, and you've got to take a story as the story-teller tells it, cat an' all. The cat got churned up; an' the old lady came back, and the boy guessed the butter had come, an' a mighty lot of it. Well, it had; there it was — and all the rest of it. When she had cuffed the boy right and left till he was about as mixed up as the critter an' the cream, the old lady went to work and emptied out the churn. She was a sensible woman, and a savin' one. 'I can't afford to lose all that *butter*, any way,' says she. So she got three big pans, an' set 'em in a row along the table, an' began to sort out three different piles. '*That's butter*,' says she;" and Sara illustrated with her index finger, as she went on, over the three imaginary pans. "'An' *that's* — butter-an'-cat; and *that's* — *all cat!*' — Now that's just the way it's been with human nachur, ever sence the Old Boy was left with the churn. — I s'pose likely there'll be a sortin' out some time, an' no butter'll be thrown away; but what concerns us now is to keep as clear of the cat part as we can. Don't have anything at all to do with that Chilstone girl, nor any of her tribe. Don't get mixed up with 'em."

"That's just it," said Estabel. "If I *could*, I would n't. I'd be glad to be the one to let alone. I don't want them, in the least; but I don't like to be pushed off. And the nice ones can't be got at, separate. The butter and cat are all mixed up."

"In this week's churnin', maybe; but there's more to come," said Sara. "If you can't sort out, just wait. And as to being pushed — why, it's a poor rule that don't work both ways. I learnt philosophy a little at school, and I know there's two ends to a magnet, and if you turn two wrong ends to each other, they *both* push away. Just look at it that way; do your own pushin' — in your own mind, at least — 't ain't worth any other — and have the satisfaction. And don't lose other chances. I know how 't is; I have n't lived in Tophthorpe twelve years — nor yet on this number-three planet for forty — without seein' things. Folks are all in the same procession. It don't make such a great sight of difference where you hitch on; everybody can't be at the head; no more could there be any head if there was n't any procession. It is n't the real head that makes any trouble; that's generally away on somewhere, out of sight. It's the hustling and treading on heels in the ranks. The kind of people that hustle ain't atchally any more important than them they think they're crowdin' back. Keep your own place, and keep step with your neighbors; don't try to catch up or get by. March to the music; the band plays for you as much as for anybody."

"Aunt would n't be satisfied with that," said Estabel, in her great longing for sympathy telling this plain, kindly woman the whole. "She wants me to catch up. She would like me to be among those that lead off. She's disappointed. And I'm — un — happy!" The last words came with a choke, which she coughed away valiantly, throwing her head up high.

"The mistake," said Sara Sullivant, "is liable to be

about who *does* lead off. 'T ain't the little ragamuffins who run ahead an' holler, any more than 't 's the ones that tag after at the tail."

"I shall never tag after," said Estabel with disdain, her head still in the air. And that was the end.

But on her pillow that night the proud little head lay passive to sorely persistent thought.

"I don't want to tag on," she said to herself. "But I want to be *wanted*! Oh, if I were only as beautiful as Eleanor Charlock! Why can't great-aunts leave their beauty in their wills for somebody that it would make so happy!"

CHAPTER XII.

SOCIAL ICEBERGS.

THERE is a belt of icebergs in the Northern Ocean. They seem to have it all their own, hard, glittering, outshutting way. It is a terrible endeavor, to come up from the safe, pleasant greenness and warmth of a temperate zone, and strive, with restless, urgent ambition, to penetrate their fastnesses and abide in their chill. But who does it for an abiding? Beyond the icebergs, it has been believed, is an Open Sea. Men have longed to find it. The icebergs were the things that were in the way, and would be till the true path that should pass by them, untouched by their threat, through some safe, sure channel, should be found.

Beyond our social icebergs — beyond all repulse and chill and desolateness, under the pole star of an eternal Truth — is a possible fair outstretch of calm space for natural human life and human-hearted fellowship. To discover this, perhaps, — to find at any rate the great magnetic secret which centres and sways the whole vast order to a sublime unity and movement, — is the only sufficient end for which to approach any stern and frozen outworks of an Arctic Circle. It is the hope, hidden and instinctive, of reaching to the beautiful heart and best of things, which moves desire and struggle. That which encrusts and hinders is not coveted for itself. Nobody cares to rest among the floes and glaciers. We think they barricade from us some noblest knowledge, some supreme experience; and human aspiration urges onward always toward the noble and supreme.

Something of this great impulse, all uncomprehended, was behind our little Estabel's restlessness and chagrin. It was behind even Mrs. Clymer's small ambitions, if she could but have understood it in herself, and by such understanding have been freed from their smallness. Except that this was so, and is always so, it would not be worth while to follow for a moment any such external effort, or to consider what so paltrily opposed it. The very paltriness and offense are the mistakes of a selfishness moved by the selfsame longing and demand for the best, and stopping short at its miserable simulacrum.

It is not to be supposed that this entire first winter of her school and city life was, after all, an unbroken loneliness and unmitigated disappointment to Estabel. Nothing is quite without exception or mitigation. Indeed, there need have been no very bitter disappointment, had she not felt that she was continually falling short of what was expected of her; had she been permitted to follow up freely the easier natural possibilities that offered to her. The severer expectations were always interposed, and made so plainly evident. Some things, some beginnings, were so quickly negated or disfavored; some others, as to which she had neither option nor control, were so, by comparison, demanded.

For instance.

"I should like to have the Goodwins here to tea, Aunt Vera."

"What Goodwins?"

"Why, Kitty and Helen. The ones that go to our school — and our church, you know. They sit right behind the Waldons. They live over in Hemlock Street."

"Do you know who they are, Mr. Clymer?"

"I know Goodwin — in a way. He's a retired sea captain."

"Oh!" Mrs. Clymer's "Oh!" was sufficiently significant to Estabel.

"They are very nice girls," she said, with a chivalrous brevity as significant in its turn as the dignity of fifteen and the certainty of a true position could make it.

"That's quite likely; but—you know very well, Estabel, that we wish you to be discriminating in your intimacies."

"So I am. I like the Goodwins, because they are worth liking."

"How does it happen that the girls worth liking all live in some Hemlock Street or Orchard Place, and are daughters of sea captains or shoe-shop people?"

"I don't know, aunt, I'm sure," she answered most demurely. Then taking up the other end of the argument, "Was n't Mr. Gould Finche a shipmaster, too?"

Mr. Clymer rose to that challenge and to the opportunity in his especial line of positional and genealogical converseance.

"That's a very different case," he said loftily, as if he had been himself a Gould Finche. "He sailed his own vessels, and carried his own cargoes. He voyaged to the Canary Islands and to India, and brought home teas and spices and wines and silks. He made a big fortune. Besides, it's a different family. His mother was a Siskin and his wife was a Redpoll. They're all birds of a feather, and flock together,—the Linnets and the Bullfinches and the Grosbeaks and the Rice Buntings; even the Larkes and the Sparrowes come in for the crumbs. You get into a solidarity there."

Mr. Clymer emunerated the list unctuously. It was something to know the genus well enough to run over the nomenclature of all the species at an instant's warning. He laughed as he ended with the Larkes and the Sparrowes and the crumbs.

"Why is it always somebody that *was*?" asked Estabel. "Is n't there anybody that *is*?"

"Plenty, little girl, plenty—that will be the *was-es*

by and by. Only we have to take the world as it's made, so far, and hold on to what's fast. It's the was-es that count. The *is* is n't finished; it's only in the process; results are n't established."

"I think I'd set my whole mind and strength, then, to establishing results, and helping other folks establish theirs. I guess that's what has made the was-es count, after all."

Mr. Clymer laughed. He delighted in shrewdness.

"I guess you'll do, little girl, one way or another," he said. "However," he resumed to his wife, "there's no particular objection to these Goodwins. They're not exactly tiptop, perhaps; but they're in the way to it. Captain Goodwin is one of the plain, solid, well-ballasted sort, that's a good deal respected. And now I think of it, his wife was a daughter of old Weaver Bird. Estabel is n't so far out, after all. If you want to get to the dome of the State House, you'll have to go up the stairs."

Sara Sullivant put the same point with a difference, when Estabel confided to her, in her delight, that the Goodwins were coming.

"I know the Goodwins," she said. "They're nice folks. I had a cousin lived with them till she was married. If they ain't first pick, they're the go-with-'ems; they always keep good company. And the way to come to lead the choir is to begin by singing in the chorus." Sara Sullivant had been to singing school, and had "sat in the seats," down in Brierville, and she knew. Brierville is an epitome, also.

Estabel Charlock was not a crushed, annihilated creature, by any means. The crushers and annihilators are not the rule, whatever a Corinna Chilstone here or there may seem to demonstrate. But the Corinna Chilstones have a power in their own little conclaves. Corinna Chilstone had a good deal of schoolgirl and embryo social power just here in Mount Street. Her mother

was a fashionable woman; the daughters of half a dozen other fashionable families were her mates in the home neighborhood and at Mr. Satterwood's. They ran down their house steps, greeting, waiting for, and overtaking each other, of a morning; they returned from school in a merry little squad, innocent enough for the most part, as individuals, but making up, as a whole, to Estabel's experience, an unkindly force of repulsion and exclusion.

The girls she knew best at school did not live in Mount Street; the girls she knew in Mount Street did not go to Mr. Satterwood's, or belong to the Mount Street squad. She felt no liberty to join these girls; to call out their names and bid them stop for her; to skip alongside, or backward, down the sidewalk, in their charmed company; to be bright with laugh and speech and ready fun — as she knew it was in her to be; above all, to share the freemasonry of an every-day, all-the-time understanding of their little world and its doings. This would have seemed to her really beautiful.

To have individual friendships was nice; she was fond of the Goodwins, Kitty and Helen; of the Lewises, Margaret, Grace, and Fanny. The Lewises' was the one house in the whole street where she went in and out, and upstairs, among the young people, with an open, easy welcome. Mr. Lewis was a quiet, hard-working gentleman on a moderate bank salary; in his family there was plenty of home pleasantness, but nothing gay, nothing that commanded outside consideration or large opportunity. They lived very much within themselves, yet such outreach as they had was of the best; so it was that Estabel was permitted the intimacy.

Everything was sporadic with Estabel. Here and there, now and then, she had her happy occasions of tea drinkings, of juvenile parties, of drives and visits with her aunt, above all, of public entertainments. But she

felt in all semi-detached. She saw others who seemed to live in a commonwealth of easy and continual privilege; and she wanted to be, not individual, but of a company. There were people enough, why not? Why should she only join on here and there, uncertainly? She would like to train with a troop, to be in step and harmony. She had always longed for it, in her far isolations in Stillwick.

Of course, there had been girls in Stillwick, but she had never found any within her immediate reach that she could fully consort with; she was out of the squad there, on the other side. In her little girlhood she had not cared for corn-cob dollies and broken-china baby houses along back fence rails; nor for riotous games of "tag" and "follow the leader," in and out of door-yards and through the barns and milking-pens. She could construct children of her own fancy, and lovely houses for them to live in, with furnishings unlimited to the positive signs of fragmentary crockery; it was easier to make believe the whole than to be handicapped with insufficient, contradictory realities.

She did love the sweet-smelling haymows; she had a sympathy for the great cows with their mysteriously quiet eyes that had all day long been gazing abroad over wide pastures, where they knew also every little clover head and grass blade and clump of weeds that they came to in their diligent, careful cropping, and all the shady pools where they drank the plentiful cool water, and the soft hollows under branching trees where they laid themselves down in their red and tawny heaps to munch and meditate. She understood cow life; here again was the pleasure of the friendly herd. She liked the searching out of secret nests where the hens worked their daily miracle, and hoarded their white treasures; often the near exchange of glances, eye to eye, with a demurè, brave feathered creature who would keep her own place, let whom might come by, only lifting her

round head with its tremulous red comb a little higher with a watchful self-assertion which Estabel would never attack nor dispute. She did love daring games of flights from mow to mow, or from the high-piled masses under the rough-timbered roof down into the low bay just full enough to receive the fall into an elastic safety. She had more than once come in with hay straws clinging to her dress and hair, — the latter in a free tumble, its ribbon lost, — to confront Cousin Lucy Henslee — and once, Harry with her — in an unexpected visit. And how could they perceive the nice distinctions between one sort of romp and another which were so palpable to her imaginative intuitions?

It was not strange that Harry Henslee, here in the city, seeing Estabel, as he had expected, making small evidence of "getting on" with what from his point of view was the "nice set," should put down the fact to natural consequence and suppose that the Stillwick roughness and crudity yet adhered, somewhere, to hinder.

He was very loyal. He often came to Mount Street of an evening; he sent flowers when he knew she was going to a party; he danced with her when he met her, but this was only now and then. He went to a good many dances where she was not invited. There was one which her Aunt Clymer permitted — nay, urged Estabel, against the girl's instinctive disinclination — to give, where was but a faint sprinkling of the young aristocracy who had been asked, but who had other engagements, indispositions, — very literally veracious, — or who said with an equal covert veracity that it was "out of their power to accept."

These things made Harry indignant for her in two directions, against those who would not come and against those who had been in such impolitic haste to invite. But he could not help the resultant impression, according to his own anticipation, that Estabel was out of her

own sphere in Tophthorpe, and would not easily slip into another. As he had said to his Aunt Lucy, he could not, single handed, do much about it; if he had had mother or sister it would have been different.

There was one way in which a man, single handed, could give that single hand to a woman and lift her up, triumphant, to his side. But he and Estabel were only boy and girl. •Even in his boyhood of eighteen years, this way, or an abstract idea of it, did occur to Harry Henslee as such things will sometimes suggest themselves to either sex at eighteen. The practical possibility was in a safe distance, as yet, certainly; but it crossed his thought with a kind of chivalrous exultation, how easily some fellow might do it in such a case, and what fun it would be to see people's faces.

And yet Harry Henslee did love prettiness and stylishness and ready-made adaptation to the politest life. Estabel's very honesty and transparency were against her in this last matter; and as to the others, whose development might of course be within the possibilities that include all things, why, it would take time to show.

"And Tophthorpe is a difficult place to develop in," the young fellow remarked to himself acutely. "To be of Tophthorpe you must be born Tophthorpe. 'Nascitur; non fit.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

LATITUDES: AND BURNT ALMONDS.

NEVERTHELESS, Estabel was developing. Even in the outside things about which she had been practically so negligent, she was, however intermittently backsliding, catching new influence and making gain.

Not all at once could all her faulty little habits fall away from her. Not always did even her sense of "whatsoever things are lovely" prevent her heedlessness of the apparent when she was most eager for the essential. Not seldom she deserved criticism, and she was very sure never to escape it.

A difficult lesson would take up her whole morning thought and time when she was supposed to be making her school toilet; and then, with ten minutes to reach her place and report to call, on would go cloak and bonnet, and off she would hurry, forgetting that she had pulled out the soiled ruffles from neck and wristband of her gown and had failed to replace them; or that a spot or tear had for two days already disfigured it conspicuously; or that her hair ribbon had been tied too many times without a smoothing. Her problem in geometry was worked out in faultless drawing or her lesson in physics conquered; and a small triangular flap in her skirt, or an oleaginous trace needing a chemical absorbent or detergent, did not matter to her in comparison. But they mattered in the eyes of the spick and span damsels who might stand far below her in the class, and they were recorded against her, keeping her ranked down among the "common."

How it would have been as to time and permanent result was fortunately not left to her own unaided experience.

Sara Sullivant took her generously in hand, and Sara Sullivant was an efficient auxiliary. She discerned what was wanted; she watched and supplied without demonstration, but with an untiring faithfulness. By and by there were no more placket slips to be pinned up, no more rips in stockings, no more frays or hitches or grease spots; no touch of yesterday's mud on shoes or hems; a fresh pocket handkerchief replaced the crumpled wad that had very likely served to rub a slate; the pigtail and the wisped or missing ribbon became things of the past. Sara offered to "do her hair;" and the thick, soft locks were rolled back prettily from the temples, and the smooth braids fastened low behind with a silver pin.

Other matters were improved also. The solecism of the old best dress for school was abolished. Two dark merinos, a garnet color and a mazarin blue, had been provided for her winter wear; and although the coveted supply of linen collars and cuffs had not been added, — those small wares not being at that time procurable by the dozen at every shop, sewing machines being but in the near future of invention, and Mrs. Clymer not fond of plain needlework, — the substitute of cambric edgings that stood up about her really pretty throat and peeped from her sleeves around her wrists was not by any means amiss; and Sara took punctual care that they were kept crisp and fresh. If things had but begun so, half the battle might have been won or spared. Mrs. Clymer's proposition was correct; it was her working out that had been mistaken; first impressions go for a good deal and last for a long time.

In school itself, as a pupil, Estabel was happy. Lessons were a delight to her. She had a pleasure in maps and dictionaries akin to that of searching in woods

and meadows for their hidden growths and blossoms. She put her imagination into all places; she held the round world in her thought and rejoiced in perfecting her mental model of it to clear and precise detail. She explored eagerly the roots and relations of language. To construe a fine, difficult passage and get the living intent of it was like writing a poem herself. And in "composition," the ordinary schoolgirl's bugbear, she was simply "out on a picnic." Numbers were sublime to her. Their very difficulties were inspiring because they were the difficulties of truth. To do a sum one must be sincerely exact. There could be no evasion, no slipping over obstinate figures and proportions; no arriving at results other than those involved in absolutely honest process. In all the complications of mathematical science, the science upon which worlds are built and moved, there was no lie. It seemed to Estabel like a religion.

"Studying together" in pairs for the hour or two after recess was an indulgence allowed upon due request and with due discretion. This pairing off was largely a matter of friendships, an opportunity for speech; but the real help that Estabel could give secured to her some companionships which might not otherwise have been so readily accorded. When Estabel felt this she did not refuse, but she made the association a purely business partnership. In her own way she was the proudest girl in school.

"Sit with me to-day," said Corinna Chilstone to Pen Westington. "What do you want to go *there* for?"

"There" was the corner of the table next which was Estabel's seat, and Penelope was moving toward it as she turned back from the little group of petitioners around Mr. Satterwood's desk. It was observable that Mr. Satterwood never hesitated to give permission when the question was "May I study with Miss Charlock?" There was sure to be genuine, quiet study and no cover

for small chatter; and whoever studied with Miss Charlock was also sure to make an appreciable step forward in her work.

Penelope drew her arm away a little impatiently from Corinna's imperious touch. "She always knows which end of the string to pull to ravel out the sentences. And besides," the girl added bravely, "I like her."

When Penelope Westington walked home one day in the recess with Estabel, preliminary to their now regular séance over their Virgil, Mrs. Clymer was *ter quaterque beata*.

She bade Estabel, who had run upstairs with the announcement and to say she had come home for luncheon, take her friend into the dining-room and ring for Archibald. Which being done, Archibald had swiftly appeared, and being asked for something to eat, had spread a fine small damask cloth at one end of the table and proceeded to place thereon, as matter of course, the daintiest of china and crystal for the slightly required service; after that a couple of delicious little chicken patties, with rolls and butter; had filled their glasses with water and set on from the sideboard a basket of white grapes and rosy lady apples; then putting the silver table bell at Estabel's right hand, had vanished into his pantry.

It was not necessary for the two girls' ten minutes, and the bite in hand expected, but it was very elegantly done, and Estabel presided with a thrill of pleasure at the æsthetic and impressional effect. How could she help her little sense of exultation that one of these school somebodies should have a glimpse of how one of the nobodies-in-particular — the "Common Things" — lived at home?

She understood Archibald's ready kindness also. According to his lights, and with the tact of his kind, he had magnified his opportunity. He had done it just as once he had improvised what he thought a similar suit-

ableness of importance for her. Sent to escort her home one evening from a little party, he had given the word at the door, "Miss Charlock's carriage," when there was no carriage for her in all the waiting line.

"This way, miss," he had deferentially signified when she had appeared; and then, preceding her by a few paces only, had fallen slightly behind again, and with no further word of explanation had so walked the few squares around to Mount Street and Number 84. Servants understand the giving of a color, and to their apprehension the variance of a shade is of a cardinal consequence.

If Mrs. Westington had understood all that lay behind in a child's heart of real human longing that found no better way under present conditions of comforting itself, than with the loyal contrivance and innocent acceptance of such small parade, she might not perhaps, when Penelope told her of the fine little entertainment, have said so guardedly but decidedly: "It was not a proper luncheon for you, my dear; don't go so far from school again in recess; you must have hurried in eating and afterward to get back;" or have repeated the incident to her sister, with the remark, "Such vulgar overdoing!" Very likely she had little notion of the overdoing of her own careful principles of natural selection by certain of her daughter's approved companions, which this little ten minutes of home importance had to make up for to Estabel Charlock; of the dismalness she and others of the unadjusted had had to suffer in the half hours of recess, when Corinna Chilstone and her retainers climbed to their typical "impregnable castle" in the open lots where the gravel excavation stopped, leaving a small isolated green projection outside a garden still fenced in, and there maintained their supreme elevation against all ordinary comers; these last reduced to choose between a dull street walk or a game of restricted play in the bricked

house yard. Unless, indeed, they might bethink themselves of the beautiful green ways under the grand old elms of the Long Mall, easily near, that were open to everybody. But that unconditionality was what spoiled allowance; it was not prerogative. Like the inheritance of all things, it was only for the meek. It was already getting to be so "common" to go there!

It is not altogether easy for sensible, contented grown people to comprehend the sharp trials of such petty, childish differencing of place and choice, — as if one poor little spot, appropriated by a few, could leave no other to be appropriated; could become more keenly desirable than any other in the wide city, or the wide earth, for the time being. If it were deserted by the few the many would not care to succeed to that from which the charm of privilege had gone; the charm would have been transferred elsewhere; a new spot would have been made inaccessible; even a child would find out that both privilege and denial had been purely factitious things. It is not easy for real growth to comprehend the same small struggles and heartburnings of a later life, or to see that they are the same. Yet they go on; there will always remain such a large proportion of ungrown-up persons in this little kindergarten of humanity!

Estabel was by no means without recourse in the daily little tacit or open encounters of her girl world. Ordinarily proud and self-contained, she could now and then meet the blunt weapons of a crass savagery with a keen, fine blade of sarcasm, flashed forth when least expected, by herself or any one; or she would escape, with some sudden turn of grace and spirit, an intended blow.

One day Mr. Satterwood gave his scholars an exercise in geography, testing their general and comparative knowledge as to influences and conditions of varying latitudes. It was a questioning upon lines and bounda-

ries, climatic effects, differing densities of population, characteristics of inhabitants, products, industries, limits of vegetations, temperatures, — all that would indicate a certain comprehensive and deductive intelligence of facts and their relations to life and its possibilities upon our globe.

Estabel delighted in this geographic generalization; it was as a holding of the whole earth in a grasp; an understanding of its vital construction and administrative order. Her answers were statistically correct, luminous with perception. Mr. Satterwood's face beamed whenever the turn came to her.

Therefore, he and the whole class were startled into blank surprise when, after traveling all the way up from the equator in a succession of interesting data and disquisitions, the last question of all came to Estabel.

"At what degree of latitude do we find impassable ice, and the end of practical advance or occupation?"

A gleam of sudden mischief shot across Estabel's face.

"At a little above forty," she said recklessly.

"Miss Charlock!"

"That's as far north as I've tried it, Mr. Satterwood."

The girls for the most part simply stared. Mr. Satterwood's face betrayed a relaxation of amusement, which he held in check. Estabel had again a "convertible 3" as result of her brilliant recitation.

After a while the joke crept round.

"So silly!" said the girls who could not have been bright.

"So rude!" said some whose politenesses were ice-bound.

It did her no good. Electric coruscations thaw nothing. She remained frozen out. What was worse, she was, like other Arctic explorers, frozen in; she could not set sail and get away.

Dancing school was a severer ordeal than day school. The representative set here was the exclusive one; there was little refuge for the isolated.

There were no regular seats; there were, consequently, seats of conventional prescription; odd ones were more easily kept odd and put aside. There was no silent rule, no constant occupation; there was, therefore, social choice and congregation of affinity. The good times were in certain defined yet unpremeditated good places — sometimes here, sometimes there, but always by some indisputable determination and consent.

The boys, gathered more heterogeneously at the other side of the hall, perceived readily enough how the "gentler sex" resolved itself into nucleus and nebula, and which way the successful rush would tend when partners were called. It would require some brave generosity to walk down the comet-like trail of girls along the line to its thin end and deliberately lead out one of the left-overs.

Signor Scalchi had often to take a reluctant youth by the elbow and march him up to a polite "introduction."

Perhaps the effrontery of girls or women in asserting demarcation is only equaled by the timidity of men and boys in crossing their invisible barriers.

In the leisure time between the classes and the dances there was talk, subdued frolic, reading of story books by the more quiet or the neglected, and candy munching, the latter an established and important feature of the occasion. Offerings of sweetmeats from youthful admirers to their little belles were as much in order, and held as delicate, as those of flowers, while greatly more substantial in delight. The girls who had more pocket money than adoration usually stopped on their way from home at Leduc's and provided themselves. Leduc's burnt almonds and chocolate drops were irresistible. Estabel could always command a supply of these, and a story book made her happy anywhere.

Coming back from her class one afternoon, she noticed as she approached her place that one of the Arkleys had taken up the volume she had left there, and was intently reading it. It was Miss Leslie's "Althea Vernon."

As Estabel seated herself the other girl looked up. "Oh, is it yours?" she said, and laid the book down without thanks or apology.

Estabel drew a paper parcel from her pocket. It was a simple white cone, twisted at the end. In those days there were no bonbonnières. She held it out, unfolding it at the top. "Will you have some almonds?" she said. She was too incately polite—that is, kind—to take back even her own book without proffering some little ready civility.

But Hepsie Arkley caught at the instant an admonishing glance from her sister, who sat enthroned in the very angle of the corner of honor for the day, from which radiated the little groups of privilege. She shook her head and started up. Her elbow struck the outstretched hand of Estabel, the paper cone was jostled from her hold, and the sweet confections rolled rattling upon the floor.

Signor Scalchi had a headache, perhaps, or his new pumps hurt him; it was one of his "fiddlebow days," when that ensign was most imperative with rap and peremptory gesture. He turned frowningly toward the sound and started with his firm-poised tread straight for the spot.

Estabel had just picked up the last little chocolates.

"Mees Sharloke!" the dancing master accosted her with terrible accent and emphasis, and with uplifted bow, "you vill please go into de dressing groom to eat up your leetle re-fection. Dees hall ees not von restaurant!"

A titter went round the benches.

Estabel stood up, proud and flaming. A window was open close by, for the day was mild, and the hall

had been overheated. With one scornful sidewise toss, she sent the paper of confectionery through into the street; then she swept such a beautiful curtsey that Signor Scalchi smiled, in spite of himself, a professional approbation. "My little refection is finished, signor," she said. If the first syllable of "finished" had a slight touch of the signor's own vowelizing it may have been an involuntary echo.

With a bow, half sarcastic, half friendly, the irate gentleman left her, and returned to his instruction. From the class of boys under tuition, and broken instantly from line at the signor's diversion, a voice was heard, "She's a spunky little cuss, anyhow!"

"Yong zhenteelmen, your places!" thundered the master, and the master's bow fell sharply and reiteratedly upon the back of his violin. "Master Sheelstone, you zhoost like von eel!"

Again, it did no good. Spirit, "spunk," cleverness, only marked her as exceptional; she had no business to be brilliant or conspicuous; no business with repartee, or any sort of getting the better; it was only fresh and flagrant *casus belli* and by no manner of means a claim to concession or favor. Such things "would never do in Topthorpe."

Estabel was just and logical by nature. She could not understand it. Sometimes, turning the whole strange puzzle over in her mind, she faced it in direct, grave fashion, and demanded of it what right, what reason, it had to be. Least of all could she understand why older people, who had everything in their own hands for themselves, should care or should submit.

What was this intangible "place in society?" Why did n't they just go on — as somebody must have gone on long ago — and make their own place and live their own good and pleasant life in the making? You see she had the misfortune to be where the older restlessness and discontent were evident day by day.

"I think, Aunt Vera," she said one afternoon, not long after these later episodes, "that you have as beautiful a house and as beautiful things in it as there can be in all Tophthorpe. Don't you?"

"Of course. Your uncle has spared no expense. Why should n't it be as beautiful as anybody's?"

"Why don't you just live in it, then, and have the good of it? Why do you care about going to Mrs. Seveare's?"

There had been a not unusual sort of discussion that morning at the breakfast table between Mr. and Mrs. Clymer apropos to a certain not forthcoming invitation.

"I don't care in the least about going, child. You don't understand. I only think I might have expected to be invited. I have asked her here."

"But she did n't come."

"That makes no difference. Perhaps she could n't. People who have a great many engagements can't always accept. But they might return an obligation."

"Maybe they have too many to return, all at once. But it seems to me it's only obligation, after all. You don't care about going, and she does n't care about coming. I don't see what it's all good for. If I had such a great, elegant house, and could do as I liked, I'd have such a lovely way of my own in it that I never need stop to think about other people's ways or houses—that I did n't have anything to do with, and was n't really interested in."

"You'd be an extremely wise woman, and you'd turn the world right over with your little finger, no doubt."

"Well, anybody's little finger can do it—to their own latitude and longitude—if they like. It's hung on an axis," said Estabel with more cleverness of illustration than exactness in grammar.

At that moment Dr. Ulick North walked in.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTOR ULICK NORTH.

HOWEVER grand and sweet in its original Greek or in the Latinized form in which it comes to us, "Ulysses" is not a pretty name in Anglo-Saxon ears. It seems hardly a Christian name at all; yet it was young Dr. North's, descended to him from a maternal grandfather. He had felt the heirloom an infliction. Not yet had the Homeric title become historic in our own land; our national Ulysses was yet in his own rising manhood, an unknown contemporary of this other of our simple story. Yet there was possible augury in the christening of both. For Odysseus stands, according to the lexicons, for "The Angry;" the readily roused, we may infer, to generous and martial indignation; the quick to battle for the right.

The merciful shortening by which the archaic *prænomens* was familiarly handled in the instance under narration became its bearer well, and derogates nothing from heroic significance. It has a quick, alert, positive sound; it even suggests in very commonplace dialect a prophecy of conquering. And if Ulick North was anything he was quick, positive, determined; aggressive against whatever he found challenging a righteous contention. He was keen, too, as such spirits are, to detect the thing so to be opposed. He had the fault of his virtue; he was always diagnosing the mischief in human life from its every least developing symptom. He was critical, cynical; unsparing in judgment, though just and fair in circumstance, and open to new evidence.

He could throw himself over when he received conviction of mistake, but it is to be confessed that the conviction must be very strong. Mere misgiving, question, would not do; it was apt to be put aside as a weak doubt, of which there was no real benefit to be taken. He stood upon that which was already established in his own mind until the ground broke from under him. You perceive, therefore, that it might be quite possible he should be prejudiced. It was pretty certain that he would be called so.

Ulick North was nephew to Mr. Abel Clymer. He was twenty-seven years old, beginning to get a foothold in his profession, though despising all personal effort or social diplomacy for obtaining practice. Mr. Clymer had a good opinion of Dr. Ulick, and foresaw success for him, not an inconsiderable element in the formation of Uncle Abel's good opinion. He made him welcome to his house, and Ulick came. It grew to be a habit with him to come often. Persons of a scrutinizing, analytical disposition are prone to follow certain lines until they make them grooves. They become interested in mere investigation; their theories are slowly building; the working of things, the manifestations of motive, attract them, almost independent of personality, or even of intrinsic worthiness. Such persons are metaphysically curious. Also, if they have high standards and abstract perceptions of their own, they find so rarely that which passes the ordeal of their critical tests, — so little anywhere in which they can rest with full concord and acceptance, — that they are fain to make compromise, and compensate themselves with the scientific satisfactions of experiment; with the clear apprehension of the world as it is, since they cannot force the world to be as they would have it. Such men come inevitably to stand more and more aloof from life. Unless some great and generous experience makes them one, before they are aware, with a supreme reality in it, they are as in

the world and not of it; lookers on, indeed, as if standing apart from the very planet in space, and planting their clever surveying instruments to take its measurement.

Ulick North made a study of the household life in Mount Street as he knew it. He waited to see what would come of it. It was in its way typical. He was in no sense mean or disloyal in this watching and weighing. His personal feeling was kindly enough. It was simply "a case," which illustrated to him a whole class of peculiar derangements to which certain forms of human organization are liable.

There was a degree of hardness in this which was referable to a cause. At twenty-four Ulick North had had an experience which embitters many men, ruins others, and leaves a few in a lifelong blank. With him, it simply closed the early vision and opened a shrewd, disillusioned perception which seemed to him a clearer — the only really clear — seeing. He had yet to learn that the finest, truest discernment is not of mere outline and measure, but of shadow, tint, perspective, and high, sweet, glorifying light; the impalpable things which make the whole showing, to a divine apprehension; as we, from our own best and most beautiful sympathies, must interpret it, or be soul and color blind.

Dr. Ulick North walked in upon the little conversation between Estabel and Aunt Vera.

"Problems?" he asked, dropping into a seat and the conversation.

"Yes. Latitudes and longitudes — distances and differences on the earth," said Estabel. She wondered if Dr. North would catch up what lay hidden behind the half explanation. He was so quick, so shrewd. She liked to try his shrewdness.

"Ah! First rectify your globe," was his answer.

"Estabel thinks she can turn the globe round with her finger," said Aunt Vera.

"I said anybody could. It turns on an axis."

"To determine accurately certain important points and relations you must elevate your axis at the indicated pole," said Dr. North.

"To get your own place into the zenith — I know," said Estabel. "But my class has n't worked out those problems yet. We're only in the latitudes and longitudes. And I said you'd better find out your own and stay in 'em, particularly when everything's very nice and comfortable there."

Dr. North laughed. Estabel was pleased. She liked to make Dr. North laugh. Usually she was a little afraid of him.

Mrs. Clymer interrupted. The metaphor was growing too difficult for her. She brought the matter down to a literal application.

"Estabel thinks I might live my own life, having pleasant things enough to live it with, and let other people alone."

"A broad view to take." The laugh was gone and Dr. North's tone was ironical.

Mrs. Clymer had not intended an injustice. Indeed, she was not conscious of any such doing or causing. Estabel was too proud to explain again.

"I'm not tall enough yet, I suppose," she said, "to look over other people's heads. Maybe I shall grow. At present I find a good deal of a crowd in the way, and some people walk on stilts. *Haud inexperta loquor*," she added with schoolgirl pedantry.

"Oh, if you're going to talk Latin, I give up," said Ulick. And Estabel became mute. Angry with herself, she was furious with Dr. Ulick.

"He need n't put a girl down so — talking Latin half the time himself," she protested inwardly. And her color mounted high, and her eyes shone with repressed indignation.

Dr. North was exceedingly amused

CHAPTER XV.

CENSORSHIP.

It is a tiresome and a hackneyed thing to do, to dwell upon the trivialities of motive and effort in a certain subformation of social life. One wonders why the trivialities themselves are not yet so tiresome and so hackneyed that they should be left off and outgrown.

In a sense they are becoming so; though from the beginnings of human society until now — and Heaven only knows how much longer — the same incomplete humanity has worked, and will work and struggle, toward its ends — mistaking waymarks all along for ends — in varying forms of the same pettiness and folly, only more or less disguised with an outer dignity and a prescribed courtesy.

We have to do with a young girl's life. It began its first maturing under precisely these circumstances of stimulus, pressure, disappointment. It was somehow out of place and alignment, and was under daily force and contradiction of that which it found no way either to resist or ally itself with, or to solve in its continually recurring problems.

And a young girl's life is no trivial nor hackneyed thing, repeated as it may be in the thousands and tens of thousands of contemporary and successive experiences.

Many things are less marked and offensive to-day than they were nearly a lifetime ago; but until the Kingdom comes there will be tares and wheat together in the field, and only the angels can truly distinguish and separate them. And the social darnel is a prickly, wounding, and noxious weed.

I should like to get to the more eventful passages, the deeper and more continuous interests of Estabel's personal history. But these were waiting and depending. Our own early life recurs to us rather in impression, or by small single points of very simple, if intense, experience, than as an artistic or consecutive story. In our growing toward the epic of our years we receive the elements which render possible its development. We must glance back into our own youth, as we are doing now into Estabel Charlock's, to understand that which in event and incident arrived later.

In the beginning of this winter she passed her sixteenth birthday. Indeed, that was the occasion upon which the party had been given which had made Harry Henslee indignant for her, that it should have been attempted in such manner and so untimely, and that it should have failed of kindly acceptance in the quarter from which acceptance was so transparently coveted.

As Mr. Clymer said on paying the bills for music, flowers, catering, and attendance, all of the costliest, "The money had gone out at the big, and the party at the little, end of the horn."

"You'd better have waited a year or two," he remarked to his wife, with as much acerbity as he, in his real good-heartedness, was ever guilty of toward her. And so she would.

But she answered him bravely: "We'll wait a year or two now, and then try again. Things alter, and girls change. So many girls grow pretty at sixteen and on. And who knows what else half a dozen years may do?"

And then there had been a mention of Harry Henslee, and of his father's wealth and his only-sonship, and of Colonel Henslee and the old inheritance at Stillwick. "Nobody will ever turn up a nose, not even a Topthorpe nose, at Mrs. Harrison Henslee, Jr.," Mrs. Clymer had declared outright, with more point than elegance.

Whether Estabel caught the last sentences of this very conversation as she came downstairs and into the room at its ending, or whether it was in the air about her, and floated round to her perception as a thistle seed floats into an open furrow, or the little bird of an undiscovered telepathy brought it, cannot be distinctly asserted; but the idea did reach her that it was not impossible she should yet grow pretty, and that — perhaps — well, she let the rest of it float away again indefinitely, leaving only a faint, sweet corollary of such proposition in the suggestion of some great good and change that might come — through somebody — to a girl who should grow pretty after she was sixteen.

And this touched her on what we may call the weak side of her nature, since her nature found only weak things as yet to expend itself upon, — her love of beauty, her passion to be of the best and the most admirable. Her other side — the side strong against shams, against all mean covetousness and pretension — was none the less alive to touch, none the less ready to be stirred to conscious motive, to resent a judgment which estimated her only at what she knew to be her lowest, even while unable herself to trace the little vanities and anxieties to their righteous reasons.

It is good — as we remember all our old faults and follies, and detect daily our new — to know there is One Judgment which understands us through and through; that even “if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

Ulick North criticised Estabel one way, Harry Henslee the other. She felt the censorship of both. Against each she set herself with the contradiction of her opposite characteristic. With Harry she maintained her high ground of indifference to superficial valuations — style, manner, fashion, success; with Dr. North she almost made parade of — she certainly did not conceal — her little femininities; she let him see that she con-

sidered her dress of consequence; that she was pleased with an attention; that she liked fun and entertainment; that she thought it nice to have plenty of money; that she enjoyed the fine things and the fine service her aunt could command; and that in everything she antagonized the severe cynicism which found fault with what was happy and natural, insisting upon a lofty disparagement of the harmless little wishes and pursuits of people who thought themselves in a pretty good sort of world, if only they could secure the good of it, and be let alone to enjoy it.

And yet every time she disappointed Harry she was grieved; and every time she detected disapproval or sarcasm in Dr. North she was hurt and angry.

One day she was standing before the pier glass in the back drawing-room, according to an almost mechanical habit she had fallen into of investigating her own face as one looks at a nursling plant from day to day, to see if it put forth leaf or bud or any promise; and Dr. North came in behind her.

She scorned to turn too quickly. She looked at him in the mirror over her own reflected shoulder, and then deliberately leaned forward for a closer inspection of herself. He need not think to surprise her into any shame. She was doing no harm. Just as deliberately she faced him presently.

"How do you do, Dr. North? I did not hear you ring."

"Archibald did. I hope I did not interrupt you."

"Not at all," she answered in the politest grown-up manner.

The doctor laughed, but he administered one of his little straightforward blows of rebuke.

"Nobody will ever get to be a great beauty," he said, "by always watching for it before a glass." His manner was as gently composed as if he had been telling a patient that nobody ever got well by continually watching his own symptoms.

"Nobody will ever get to be a great doctor," she retorted quick as a flash, "by always twisting and pinching people in their lame, sore places!" With that she sat down exactly as if nothing had happened, and as if ready for some happier conversational suggestion. These two slapped each other by mutual consent, as it were, and neither ever quite knew whether the blow stung or not.

Dr. North smiled on and left the word with her. Estabel thought he did not care whether she were really offended or only touchy, like a silly child, about her detected silliness. He should not have that last supposition to be indifferent about.

"How did you know I would like to be a great beauty?" she asked with a tranquil defiance.

"Is n't it a doctor's business to find out weak spots and sore places?"

"When people ask his advice and he can do them any good. But I suppose he does n't walk up to people on purpose to punch their black eyes and tread on their tender toes. You have n't answered my question."

"How I knew you would like to be a beauty? Well — because, oh, we won't quarrel about it. All girls do — would, I mean."

"What for?"

"To be admired, I suppose."

"I don't want that — first of all, anyhow. I'd like to be able to admire myself. I admire so many other things."

"It would n't stop there. It never does. Vanity takes to vanities. You'd want to run about and get the reflected admiration. It would be just another way of looking in the glass. But I don't blame you. All the world's so, — all after some reflection of self-love."

"I think you have a terrible quarrel with the world, Dr. North."

"It is with the world, if I take the trouble to have any. It is n't personal."

"Persons make the world. Don't you think well of anybody?"

"Just as well as anybody will let me."

"I think if I were you, I would pick out a world that I need n't quarrel with. It must be very uncomfortable."

"That world is n't made yet. And I don't expect to be comfortable."

Estabel looked at him with large, inquiring eyes. She longed to say something, but knew not what.

He could not tell this child of sixteen how he had begun to build his world, and how its very cornerstone had crumbled away from him. Even if she could understand or care, what good would it do? But he thought, with a grim amusement, that if he had touched her sore spot roughly she had very quickly, with a strange sort of blind instinct, retaliated.

Something about her childish frankness, even when it was petulant, attracted him; there was an interest in her peculiar, fearless, outright treatment of things. He wondered what sort of woman this girl would make; this young creature, full of feminine foible as he read her, yet with a kind of possible grandeur in her if foible could be eliminated. He never guessed that to her he was a more than equal mystery; that she had gathered hint, from chance words, of something that had befallen him in relations of life to which she had not yet come, the idea of which caused her to be in a vague way tender of him; which touched her with a sense that somebody owed him something of another's debt, so that even when she was most whimsical and provokable, and he most intolerant or bitter, she felt underneath all a better thing that might be in him, and a sorrow for him that it was not there.

He had been cruelly hurt, she apprehended, by some woman; some woman, for the sake and honor of all women, ought to make it up. She would like to have

him believe that a different sort of woman was possible; that some girl might be growing up into a stature of nobleness that that other had failed of, and he seemed not to believe in any more.

She believed him to be intrinsically noble, however harsh, because of that very harshness against all meanness and moral inferiority. She invested him with all that would have made him very dangerous to her if she had been twenty years old instead of sixteen. And she had no dream or consciousness of what all this meant in her, or might come to by permission of conducive circumstance and continuance of intimate relations.

Furthermore, she was in her simplicity so jealous for the man he was missing to be that she resented his determined cavil and discontent, his finding everywhere the meanness he despised. She resisted his impugments, and turned his bitterness back upon himself.

But she was only a child; she resented as she compassionate, childishly, and with but half understanding. He was by turns diverted and singularly moved.

And the two could not let each other alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE REMNANT.

"THE Remnant" was to meet at Mrs. Westington's on Sentrymarch Street.

Mrs. Westington was president, and this was the annual meeting.

Mrs. Westington had a plan to propose, and she had invited the ladies to bring their young daughters for a social afternoon. This was a beautiful opportunity for Estabel, and Mrs. Clymer eagerly appreciated it.

"The Remnant" was an old Tophthorpe institution. It had grown from the more ancient Parish Sewing Society, or rather, it was the phoenix of one risen from its ashes.

Some one had proposed calling it "The Phoenix," but the other name had been decided on as declarative of its special purpose, also modest and in gentle accordance with gospel precedent. It had grown to be unparochial, almost undenominational.

The best women in Tophthorpe were its members and managers. It moved on this line, the gathering and bestowing of remnants, — remnants of time, of thought, of money, food, clothing, material, anything. There were rooms where the material donations were received, utilized, and dispensed. Members in turn took personal charge here. It was a well-conceived, well-conducted work. The social element was a very pleasant one. It was largely under the control and influence of women who were above clique, who needed no drawn lines to fence them in; who, at any rate, recognized nothing of

them here. Money, time, thought, work, sympathy in a kindly object; these were true contribution and foundation, and "The Remnant" was generously open.

Mrs. Clymer had early joined the society. Her money, time, work, were freely given. For the thought and sympathy, those were intangible elements, and must be taken for granted. Knowing Mrs. Clymer as we do, it is not difficult nor invidious to perceive where her thought and sympathy took most vital hold.

Circles touch and intersect. There is always some node, or tangent, at which, for a point, at least, they are identical. Mrs. Clymer was tenacious of her tangents and quick to compute and catch her nodes.

During the last year she had held the treasurer'ship. She never missed a meeting. Thus she visited in Doric Row, down beyond Old Park, in Sentrymarch Street, in Chapel Green, and at houses in the Casino Crescent. On the first Thursday in every month, however it may have been between times, she was supremely content.

And now she was to take Estabel with her. Something had happened better than she had ever anticipated.

Dressed in silks, seated in their carriage, the two were driven round the Old Park to Mrs. Westington's door.

Mrs. Westington received them in her drawing-room. They were early, as it became an officer to be at the annual meeting. Only some half-dozen others were assembled when they came in.

Penelope crossed the room to greet and welcome the younger guest. This was so kind and delightful that it frightened Estabel. As Penelope led her over to her mother it seemed to her like a presentation at court — if she had known anything about such an unrepugnant matter.

Mrs. Westington was explaining in mere outline what she intended to propose in business order.

"It will interest the girls in the things they should take up in their turn, and it will bring the young people together." This was what she was saying as her daughter and Estabel approached. Then, and as others entered, she dropped the subject, but something of it was already whispered round.

"It is a lovely secret and we're all in it," Penelope said to a little inquiring group about her.

Estabel stood in the edge, but Rose Alden was beside her and she did not feel left out. "We are all in it," sounded so kingdom-of-heaven-like in her ears. She had not been so happy, she had not felt so socially alive, since she had come to Topthorpe.

It only lasted with her until, arriving late, Corinna Chilstone and her mother came in. Corinna joined her companions, and around her and Hepsie Arkley the cold, hard crystallizing began again.

She heard the whisper, "What is she here for?" and the answer in Penelope's higher bred, rebuking tone, "Hush, Corinna. Just what we are all here for." The championship was generous; but why should she need a champion? The old, proud resentment surged up from Estabel's heart to her face and thrilled through nerve and muscle. Her head went up high; her cheeks burned; she walked off toward a bay window full of plants and stood apart there. The meeting was called to order, and she found a corner seat sheltered by the greenery.

"She heard you, Cora!" Penelope said indignantly; and she came over and drew a tabouret beside Estabel's chair. Then she beckoned to Rose Alden, and Rose came and made a third. So they sat and listened, with such interest as they might—two of them, at least, with an impatience for the part coming which should concern themselves—to the secretary's and the treasurer's reports.

Various discussions followed, and several motions

were made, carried, or laid on the table. At last came the motion to adjourn the business meeting.

In declaring it so voted the president kept her standing position beside the central table, and rapped with her thimble upon its edge as the hum of voices began.

"I have now a proposition to make," she said. "I have asked these young ladies here, who are more or less naturally connected with us, in the idea that they might like to — and that we might like to have them — form themselves into a subordinate society, with a name of their own, to do the lighter, primary work for our object; undertaking the part that it will be good for the young to do, — the little things and the little errands auxiliary to our own work, by which the whole will gain, and our forces be economized. Especially, that they should make direct use and bestowal of their own remnants, which will involve a careful and probably unaccustomed consideration of what their own remnants are or may be. There is a great deal that girls may do, and that they may be learning to do, that may be a part of their best education. Later, if you approve, I can explain and suggest more in detail. I now move that we invite our daughters to organize themselves into this coöperative club and leave the decision and the action upon it to themselves."

Upon this the vote was taken, amid many kindly smiles and with a gentle rustle of approbation; and the new society was invited to appoint and systematize itself, all those who accepted the suggestion and desired to join to withdraw to the library together for the necessary preliminaries. A little memorandum of the steps to be taken in parliamentary order would be found upon the library table.

This was charming. It was a kind of coming out into society. Indeed, it was a beginning of that in the best way, as Mrs. Westington meant that it should be. The leading people in Tophorpe were not all Arkleys and Chilstones.

"Come," said Penelope cordially to the two beside her as she rose to lead the way. And Rose Alden gently linked her arm with Estabel's, to whom the word had been most evidently spoken.

How could Estabel refuse? And yet she went reluctantly with these girls, knowing that she should not be unanimously welcome, as was apparently every one of the others, not wholly in part and understanding with the young set so easily at home together. What a thing it was to have a place that nobody disputed — a recognition that was voluntary and of course from all that little world! What a nice thing it would be if nobody need be especially kind to her, because none would think of being in the least unkind!

She sat silently through the little formalities, in which Penelope had been so instructed by her mother that she could follow without hesitation or difficulty the written programme provided.

A chairman was appointed, Penelope herself. Then the question of forming themselves into the society suggested was moved, seconded, and voted upon. A president was chosen, Penelope again; this was an almost foregone conclusion. Afterward the other officers in turn. Rose Alden was to be secretary; to Estabel's intense surprise, she heard herself nominated for treasurer, but she hurriedly interposed, and with many blushes begged not to be put into any office, and one of the Arkleys was elected.

Then came the choosing of a name. There was much spirited discussion, some unparliamentary interruption and confusion of tongues. "The Little Remnant," "The Last Crumbs," were in turn discarded; "The Forlorn Hope" was laughed at, "The Raw Recruits" also. There was getting to be too much joking, and the president rapped to order.

Then Rose Alden asked how "Snips" would do. "We are n't sizable remnants at all," she said, "but we can come in for patchwork."

"Why, that is n't bad," said Marian Arkley. "It's bright; it has a snap and a meaning to it. May I move?"

"A motion is in order; I think it belongs to Rose," returned the young president with grave dignity.

And Rose moved, and Marian seconded; and it was carried by vote that the new auxiliary organization should be entitled "Snips."

"It was Estabel Charlock who thought of it," Rose told Penelope as they adjourned to cakes and coffee, after certain simple by-laws, drawn up beforehand, had been read and adopted. "She whispered to me just what I said out loud to the meeting. I could n't make her speak."

"Don't mention it," answered Penelope wisely. "We know it and that's enough. I don't see why some of the girls are so stiff about her; I think she's nice."

"It's her aunt. She parades and she pushes. Just see how she dresses!"

Mrs. Clymer was rustling across the room in her violet silk, conspicuously rich, expansive with crinoline, and adorned with finish of Honiton laces. The brooch at her throat and her tremulous eardrops were of amethyst.

Mrs. Clymer was always conspicuous; yet if any one had dared hint it to her or suggest a quieter style she would have exclaimed, "Why, how am I different from other people?" The rejoinder might have been, "You always go just a little beyond." It was a pity nobody did tell her. But it would have needed a very incontrovertible authority to convince her.

She would not have acknowledged it, but she was really nothing to her own consciousness if not conspicuous. She dressed in italics; underscored the fashion; not only that, but added an exclamation point. She exceeded occasion; she enlarged precedent. Other people

wore this, and that; why not she? But her pelerines were broader, her sleeves more highly puffed, her bonnet was more erect of crown and flaring of brim, more nodding with plume and contrasting with color, than the other pelerines and sleeves and bonnets. Moreover, if somebody wore this, and somebody else that, she wore this and that together; beads, ribbons, flowers, and what not. So with her entertainments. "They all do," was her motto; so she did it all, and all the time. Mrs. Westington was right. Overdoing may be ill doing. The false principle extended even to her ethics and her theories of living; what she found in separate or occasional instance she took for countenance to predominant motive and habitual indulgence. She quoted the inch and took the ell.

It was hardly possible that Estabel and her Aunt Vera — good-hearted, generous, kindly mannered, and universally obliging as Aunt Vera was — should make their purposes identical or run toward their aims on the same rails. The one wanted to get at the why and the worth while of everything; the other lived absolutely in appearances and plausibilities, and never searched or probed beneath the surface. What was the use of digging down, and subsoiling, and turning comfortable conditions topsy-turvy?

As they drove home around Old Park, Mrs. Clymer was full of delight and congratulation. It was such an excellent plan of Mrs. Westington's, and really on purpose to get the young people all together socially. "I told you, Estabel," she said, "that there would be things ready for you if you would only keep yourself in the way of them. You did n't want to come with me this afternoon; but see what you would have missed. It is everything to be in at the start."

"I would a great deal rather never go again," said Estabel.

"Estabel Charlock! You are absolutely unmanageable!"

"I don't mean to be, Aunt Vera, when you are so kind. I only say I would *rather* not go again. Of course, I shall go if you want me to."

"And what does that amount to, if you are determined to go hating it in your heart?"

"Aunt Vera, you are doing a great deal too much for me, and yet you can't make me into the kind of a girl you want. Don't you think it would be better to send me back to Aunt Esther?"

This was confounding. Mrs. Clymer caught her breath before she answered.

"No, I don't," she said. "What would become of your education? Are you willing to give that up? In a few years from now you would be sorry enough — on all accounts."

Estabel was silent. She knew very well that to give up her education would make her sorry.

"Auntie," she said very gently, "if you would only just *educate* me, — and then, when I am fit for something, see what can be done with me? Maybe I should understand better, by and by."

"I believe that's the most sensible thing you have said yet," returned Aunt Vera.

She looked at the girl with a fresh scrutiny as she spoke. She remembered her own argument with her husband. Estabel might grow pretty before she was eighteen. And things might go quietly on toward some end which would determine everything.

She had never yet adverted to what might have seemed a fact greatly to her purpose. She had not mentioned to any one, as introducing Estabel to notice, that she was a grand-niece of that splendid Eleanor Charlock who had taken Topthorpe by storm two generations ago. She was wise, with her usual surface wisdom. Why should she invite comparison? It would be better to say nothing of that till Estabel's awkward age should be past, and time should prove what she might come to.

She had once, on her own part, before her marriage, essayed a casual word of the family connection.

"My sister's husband" — she had begun to say when some old story of the aunt's triumphs was being rehearsed in her presence; but before she had declared the relationship, an elderly lady, — who had been a beauty in her own way in the next succeeding time to that in which Eleanor Charlock had eclipsed not only her contemporaries, but those who might come for a good while after, — had observed, "Oh, yes; I remember her when I was a little girl. She was handsome; but she really was n't anybody in particular, otherwise. She just happened. And Topthorpe society was small then. It was n't a case likely ever to occur again."

And Mrs. Clymer had laid that saying up. Everybody would not speak just so; there had been, at any rate, all the Henslee prestige added. But it would be as well not to throw away too early in the hand a card that would have its value later.

CHAPTER XVII.

"SNIPS."

MRS. CLYMER settled it in her own mind that there was to be a waiting time. As to the persistent and anxious following up of a single, difficult purpose, this was a relief. But Mrs. Clymer never did really wait. It was her nature to abhor a vacuum. The meanwhile with her must be filled with something; if not the best, then the best that she could get. This necessity was upon her, not only in regard to Estabel, but as to the intervals between one decided step and another in her own social career.

She had not been unimpressed by Estabel's early suggestion illustrated by the finding of latitude and longitude, and being content to abide in one's own. She was not a person to go on sacrificing immediate ease and pleasure to a remote and uncertain aim; the bird in the hand, in short, to the bird in the bush. The aim must be a noble one, enlisting a noble constancy of nature, — the bird must be singing such a beautiful promise that to come even near the bush or beneath the inaccessible tree and listen to and interpret its wonderful message will be better than to hold fluttering in one's fingers a tamer, commoner thing, — to induce such sacrifice and sustain such constancy.

Mrs. Clymer had neither the aim nor the nature. She was eminently of a disposition to lose nothing as she went along. She was forty years old. She was not going to put off till fifty the beginning to live. She had the price of life in her hand and its equipment

about her. With her money, and her fine house, and her fine clothes, and her carriage, she could be in full evidence to herself, and to a certain world of others like herself, as a woman lacking no outward sign. There were plenty glad to enjoy with her what she could offer, to admire and be astonished, as the serene manner-born would never do. She could have hosts of friends if she would take them; she could come and go in splendor.

What difference was there between her and those of merely longer date in the same things, wearing their old grandeur in a proud simplicity? Maybe she would be simple by and by when she had demonstrated that she could be gorgeous. Mr. Clymer was wont to boast to her, realizing the convenience of an *alter ego* to make his boast to, that he could buy out any half dozen of the cofferdam circle. And if with that assurance behind her position Mrs. Clymer could not hold herself assured, where were anybody's credentials to anything?

So when Mr. Clymer gave the social inch, she began with alacrity to run off the ell. He had admitted that to get to the dome of the State House you may as well go up the stairs. And doing so, you need not hurry yourself out of breath to reach the top. You may even sit down halfway up and rest.

Her visiting list grew longer and more mixed. Here also was the same old logic. If Mrs. Blank knew Mrs. Dash she might cultivate the former lady. And if she might know Mrs. Blank the line need not be severely drawn between her and her relatives, Mrs. Ditto and Miss Anne Soforth. In the same way that she reached up, why might she not reach down and along? Things that are equal to the same are equal to one another. Anchored to this axiom she swung out on a long cable.

She drove about merrily everywhere and had a delightful time. Whatever went on that was generally or readily accessible, she was at the front or in the midst

of, — church socials, charitable fairs, amateur theatricals, concerts, public celebrations or exhibitions, lectures, weddings, funerals. Clubs were not as yet.

Mrs. Clymer was in every crowd, and all the crowd knew who she was. She nodded and smiled and howd 'ye-doeed. She remembered everybody and everybody had to remember her. She appeared to her own wide circle — for she certainly had a circle — to be making a grand success.

She enlarged her charities; she belonged not only to the Remnant, but to the Dorcas, and to the Five Loaves, and to the Two Fishes; all the elementary associations which nowadays, like trusts in trade and developments of discovery and invention, are grandly consolidated and moved by immense central dynamic power. In this way she had entrance by a score of penetrating lines within the touching and intersecting circumferences before adverted to. Every centre has its radii. And any radius may be followed inward.

If Mr. Clymer ever secretly objected to this wide illustration of his principle and all that the erratic sweep of his wife's orbit involved, he left off making any hindrance. He gave her line and time, as she had made up her mind to give to Estabel. The longest way round may still be the shortest way home.

For the rest, nobody seems to have found out why it not seldom happens that a shallow-brained, superficial woman takes practical rule in a household, even against a man's preconceived idea and full intent, while the man, with his purpose and conviction, stands aside and makes way for her. It is because a household is a construction. And the law of construction is that the strength of the whole is only as the strength of the weakest part. That is the entire solution. And it is the most conclusive argument for the higher education and development of women; the term "higher," however, being most carefully and discriminately defined.

The result, at any rate, of the present order of things in our story was that, as with the old Israelites between their alternate salvations and declensions in the times of their Judges, "there was peace in the land for" — well, all through the remainder of that school and society year, at least.

The peace might have been broken if Mrs. Clymer had known what Estabel had done in proud, provoked defiance one afternoon at the "Snips." With her own careful withholding of her queen of hearts till she might play it, with its following, as if hearts had been trumps, she would have been dismayed at Estabel's flinging down, in open challenge to king and ace, her humbly but securely guarded queen of spades.

It was a rarely summerlike afternoon in May. The trees in the Long Mall were tipped with their fresh, tender greenery; the lilacs in the gardens were all aplume in white and purple, and their scent, with the rich sweet of the daffodils and the ineffable pure breath of violets, floated out from dooryard and inclosure. Outer wraps were cast aside, if only for the day.

Estabel walked up the bricked sideway under the elms that stretched out over the fence from the Park border. To walk within was already getting to be the privilege only of nursemaids and children; so the great, wise trees, Estabel thought, knowing how many child-like hearts were kept outside, reached forth their unstinted benediction. She wondered why there should be so many things that, as soon as they become really beautiful to do, are done with.

She wore a pretty, small-checked silk dress of brown and white, fresh and glistening. A round cape of the same, ruffled, fitted close about her shoulders, and just touched its frilled edge to the waist line. Her straw bonnet, lined and crossed with blue, had a full blue bow tied over the top, between brim and crown. Another, smaller, matched it, fastening under the chin

where the pretty circle met that framed her face. Inside, against her hair, were little white, starlike flowers. Estabel had had her way about this new spring costume. From what she saw others wear she had learned to choose and adapt for herself, and she found that to say "The girls wear this and that" insured her preferences.

A dainty, restrained sense of the beautiful time, the sweetness, the delight of air and bloom and sunshine, responding to all, possessed her. It was the joy, highly refined and limited by its refinement, of spring and of young life. If she had been in Stillwick she would have been out in the woods in a common print gown, free to run, to jump the brook, to sing, to fill her hands with early blossoms and her heart with unrestrained ecstasy. Here she was only going quietly up the pavement of a city street, where from numberless windows her every movement might be seen, to sit properly in a parlor with other young, well-trained maidens, and sew patchwork or make a little apron. There was a meeting of the "Snips" with the "Remnant" at Mrs. Alden's. Estabel did not so much mind going there, although she was alone this time. For once Mrs. Clymer had to miss a meeting; she was at home in a dark room with a nervous headache; but had insisted, nevertheless, upon Estabel's attending without her.

Estabel slipped in almost unobserved — perhaps more comfortably, after all, than if Aunt Vera's sounding robes and assertive movement had led the way, and found a seat in the back drawing-room with Rose Alden and the Goodwins and Pen Westington and Margaret Lewis, who was Pen Westington's cousin. They were together in the recess of a large window looking out, first into a balcony, over that into a garden, and beyond into the hushed seclusion of an old city graveyard, where the birds twittered, and lichen-cruste stones leaned as with some mysterious, silent fellowship toward each other.

The window was open; potted plants in bloom made a hanging garden of the balcony, and a bed of violets below, and white and yellow crocuses among the grass, sent up their smiles and sweetness. A second window was occupied by Cora Chilstone and her special little coterie. There was animated talk in each little group, and occasionally a word and a laugh were exchanged across.

"Oh, *is n't* it a lovely day?" exclaimed Rose Alden, lifting up her head and taking in a long, ecstatic breath. "Is n't it hard to sit still when nothing else keeps still, but is just growing and blooming as hard as it can?"

"If you could see the woods at Stillwick to-day!" responded Estabel, the keen feeling of all that outside freedom and sweetness taking fresh hold upon her at the word. "The rocks will be red with columbines, and there will be great blue patches of wild violets, and clouds of anemones! Down by the brook there is no end of them."

"It must be beautiful," answered Pen Westington. "I've never been in the country so early in the spring. But I feel just like Rose, wild to be off everywhere, along with the wind and the sunshine."

"Living in the country is like being part of it, — wind and sunshine and brook and flowers and birds and all. Here everything is measured out and railed in and portioned round. The milkman brings the milk in cans in a cart, and that's all we know about it."

"What have the milkman and the milk to do with it, I wonder?" came in a kind of *sotto voce* from the opposite recess.

It occurred to Pen Westington that now was a very good time to mention something that had been told her. "You knew Harry Henslee down in Stillwick, I believe?" she said.

"Oh, yes; very well," replied Estabel, and added nothing.

"He stays there with his grandfather, does n't he? He said you were a good deal there, too, with your aunt. Was it Mrs. Clymer?"

"No. My other aunt."

"She lives in Stillwick?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you had a lovely home there?"

"I thought it was nice."

"Is your aunt's place near the Henslees'?"

"Not very. And it is n't a 'place,' at all. She lives in the village."

Over at the other window a smile and glance went round.

"Oh! She must miss you. But I suppose the village is n't lonesome," said Rose Alden. Penelope had been silenced for an instant by what she had drawn forth, as if she had somehow pulled a wrong thread and things had raveled. She almost wished she had let well alone. Rose Alden would not let the silence fall suddenly, like a quenching.

Estabel had no notion of letting silence either shield or slur. "No," she said. "It is not exactly lonesome. And Aunt Esther is a very busy woman." In very perversity, now, she was courting a disclosure.

"Busy?"

"Yes. She keeps a millinery shop and a library."

A laugh broke forth from the Chilstone corner.

Penelope got up, with her very tallest dignity, and walked first to the centre table, where the materials for work were assorted. She took up a pair of little calico sleeves and carried them over to Marian Arkley, who sat beside Corinna.

"I think you must be nearly ready for these," she said to her. "They are to be set with the seam to the notch in the armhole.—Corinna Chilstone, I'm ashamed of you!" she whispered severely in the other's ear.

"Are you?" Corinna drawled, not whispering.

"You'd better be ashamed of yourself with your catechising. See where it's landed you, in Aunt Esther's millinery shop!"

Rose Alden was chattering with all her might. Penelope dropped her heavy cutting scissors and pushed a chair aside to pick them up. She hoped the rude taunt had not been heard. Her head was lifted higher yet, and there was an indignant color in her face as she walked away.

Afterward, telling her mother about it, she said impetuously, "I wish I need n't know Corinna Chilstone at all!"

"You can't quite put people out of society, my dear. There is too much interlinking and interweaving. It's like a silk web; if one stitch is dropped it ravela a great many. Corinna will outgrow some of this impertinence. In the meantime — *choose your intimates.*"

"Mamma," said Penelope after a puzzled pause, "don't you think good society is dreadfully *mixed*?"

And at this Mrs. Westington had to laugh.

Corinna had also her story to tell at home. And she ended with, "Penelope Westington does n't keep to her own set, at all. She is awfully independent. It is n't really safe to be with her. She'll get left out herself if she does n't take care."

Mrs. Chilstone's sister, who was not a professional society woman, was taking tea with them. "I like Penelope Westington," she said. "She is always lady-like, and her manners are so cordial."

"*Too cordial.*" Mrs. Chilstone clinched the matter and the moral for her daughter with those two emphatic words.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THEATRE.

THE Trepeake Theatre was crowded.

It was a family night, a benefit for a young Tophthorpe favorite, and the selections were made to attract fittingly the young as well as their elders.

At school that morning, everybody was "going;" that is, everybody who spoke at all. Those who could not say that said wisely nothing.

The plays were the musical rendering of "Cinderella" and the dramatized "Cricket on the Hearth." The same young actress took the parts of Cinderella in the first, and of the personified "Cricket," with song and dance, in the second.

In those days there was no need of managers' law for the removal of bonnets. Nobody wore a bonnet at all. Heads were "dressed;" ladies came in carriages; there were no street cars — no crowds of people from near and far, requiring troublesome head cover on the way.

The boxes were brilliant. The "pit" was filled by men only, who looked upward and around to the resplendent circles, where sat, as it were, the angels of heaven.

Mr. Clymer had taken a box in the first tier, directly fronting the stage. Mrs. Clymer had invited Mrs. Lewis and her eldest daughter; Estabel had been permitted to ask the Goodwins; Dr. North was to look in as his time might allow, and there was room for a chance friend to come and join them if it so happened. Mrs. Clymer had learned that it was well to appear with a party, and in control.

A fashionable hairdresser had come to Mount Street at five o'clock. Mrs. Clymer and Estabel displayed the results of his art, the former in an elaborate coiffure of plaits and puffs behind and large curls drawn back in clusters about her ears, above which small marabout feathers nodded. A bronze satin dress with Marie Antoinette cape of costly lace, open sleeves with underdraperies of the same soft, delicate fabric, and a white Canton crape shawl, negligently falling around her, completed her toilet. Estabel had on a blue silk frock with swansdown borderings; and her hair was let loose from the schoolgirl braids and made into a cataract of curls, tied back with a blue ribbon knotted over the temple. The fair, soft tint of her locks, gleaming in their liberated curves, was really lovely in the gaslight.

Estabel looked nearly, if not quite, pretty to-night. I don't know that I need qualify the statement. She *was* pretty. She had becoming color about her; her bright young face was lighted both by beautifying outward illumination and that of the inner joyous radiancy to which it was so ingenuously transparent.

The Goodwins were nice, refined, daintily and modestly attired; Margaret Lewis was beautiful; her mother stately in quiet simplicity. Mrs. Clymer was satisfied with her party.

The Westingtons were in the next box; Penelope spoke to Estabel across the partition. A little way off sat the Aldens with a company of friends; Mrs. Clymer and Mrs. Alden exchanged polite bows and the girls gay nods and smiles. Only a little farther yet were the Chilstones and the Redpolls; what matter that they did not see nor bow? Mrs. Clymer was in the midst; the whole audience was fashionable; she was a fact in Tophthorpe as much as any of the flashy, intimate set alongside which she drifted. They were only the light, pretentious order, after all; there are spheres and spheres; who was to know where she touched most familiarly, and how far?

After the play began Estabel was absorbed. She was no longer of the audience, far less a conscious personality in herself. She was within the story—yes, the story even within the story. Fairyland was behind the outside tale; behind the loneliness and the unkindness; behind, above, beyond, and yet just close beside the kitchen chimney and the cindery hearth. The girl in the dull brown gown had links with the hiddenly beautiful, the supernatural. When she was left all alone the Queen Godmother came. The secret of a sweet, patient life was some sure glory.

The drop scene fell. The act was over. Cinderella had gone, in her golden coach, in her glittering dress, in her magical glass slippers, to the royal ball. The brown gown had parted from her shoulders like an opening chrysalis, and its shriveling folds had been wafted away and had disappeared like wind-driven dead leaves. Beautiful music sounded from the orchestra. Upon its delicious strains Estabel's fancy floated on, and followed into a splendid triumph.

She did not look around. She did not even know that she was leaning forward, gazing toward the curtained stage in the unmoved attitude in which she had watched and listened.

Her Aunt Vera looked around, and noticed. She saw that Harry Henslee had come into the Chilstones' box and was seated beside Corinna. The two glanced over at Estabel. Corinna said something, with a laugh; then she began talking as if describing something. Harry's eyes, as he listened, remained fixed toward this centre box. Suddenly he turned full upon his companion and answered quickly. Corinna's countenance changed; the scornful smile, so habitual to it, dropped away from the features, leaving its downfallen impress a blank surprise. In a few minutes Harry Henslee got up and took leave with a bow. In a moment more their own box door opened and he came in.

There was room behind Estabel, at the end of the second row. He took the seat, after a word with Mrs. Clymer, and leaned over into Estabel's abstraction, from which he called her back by the sudden speaking of her name.

"Oh, Harry! Is n't it beautiful?" she exclaimed to him.

"Yes. But it is n't there just now. Had n't you better come back among other people?"

"I was so glad for Cinderella!"

"Why, you knew it all before, did n't you?"

"Oh, of course. But so many old things seem new, when you really see them."

"There's more coming. Those old catamarans will get their reckoning-ups. Wait till you see them paring off their toes and heels to get into Cinderella's slippers!"

"I don't believe I care so very much for that."

"What is it you care for?"

"Why, what Cinderella had all along, that they never knew anything about—what all the real grandeur came from. *Their* little grandeur was n't anything, you see. It would n't have been, even if they'd married the prince."

"Both of them?" Harry laughed.

"Oh, you know what I mean. If they'd had the whole kingdom. Cinderella and her godmother had a better one. It's the inside of the story I like."

Estabel had two auditors. Dr. North had come in and had taken his stand beside Harry, who did not notice. Estabel was talking with Harry over her other shoulder, and did not see the doctor at all.

"Don't you care for outsides?" asked Harry.

"Why, yes, ever so much, when they mean insides."

"That's a riddle. Estabel, whatever made you tell those girls that Cousin Esther was a village milliner?"

"Why not? They were asking me questions about

Stillwick, and whom I lived with there, and whether Aunt Esther had a 'place' like Henslee, and I just answered."

"You need not have explained particulars. They would n't understand, and it was none of their business."

"It is Aunt Esther's, and I'm not ashamed of it."

Estabel's head was up, and her color, in the way she had when roused.

"Well, I explained more," said Harry Henslee. "I thought if you had begun at that end it let me off from not beginning at the other. So I told them you were a grandniece of my grandmother, Mrs. Colonel Henslee. An old lady over there — that one with the turban cap — pricked up her ears. 'Eleanor Charlock!' she said. 'Why, I knew her. She was in society when I was very young. Oh, what a beauty she was! And how the whole town went crazy after her! And that's a Charlock?' Did n't you see the opera glasses all turned this way?"

"No, indeed. I was n't looking. I was n't looking anywhere, I think; only where I could n't really see — after Cinderella."

"Well, I should n't wonder if Cinderella should be looked after — after this."

"Hush! The curtain's going up."

She did not apparently take the trouble to interpret his meaning.

Harry Henslee went away and joined his father in the orchestra seats.

Ulick North seated himself in the place the boy left, behind Estabel. He did not interrupt the girl. She was absorbed in the play again. But he sat and thought things over about this other Cinderella.

What might grow up between those two? What would this girl come to, with the two sides of her — the one so impressible to outward things, to the world

as she found it, the other so contemptuous of all that did not reach down, through, or in, to that she called "inside"?

She might so easily be deluded by an apparent harmony; had he not been deluded so himself? She might, as he had done, translate mistakenly; might think she found a reality where there was only thin semblance. Or, indeed, the true in herself might weaken in discouragement; might find nothing to answer directly to it, and content itself with indirections; be forced to take life on the surface, since it would not yield to her its depths. This surface world might yet become very kind to her; she might succeed to her inheritance in its interest and indulgence. How would it seem to her then, offering her its smiles and sunshine? How long would this outright honesty of hers, this stringent demand of the real and best, hold out? She was not yet seventeen. What would the next coming years do with her?

And how deep, after all, in herself, did this inward reality lie, by which she was now testing the world in its first, fragmentary relations to her? Was it anything more than a fairyland—an inside of fancy and romance, just as unsubstantial, as sure to fail her when she would take vital hold of it, as the other dreams and wishes, of beauty and place and comradeship, that allured and eluded her now? She was only a child; she knew neither herself nor life. Everybody was once a child, but what has come of all that childhood?

He, Ulick North, was a man of fact. He cherished no illusions. He could not rest in the intangible. Deed, not dream, character, not aspiration, were his demand. No theory held him until demonstrated by experiment. He had had eleven more years of life than Estabel, and the years had not, he thought, been good to him. He supposed himself done with expecting much of good. His business was to fight evil; that

seemed to be what men were put into mortal circumstance for, if, indeed, they were put at all, and things did not just happen into circumstance. He was to antagonize pain and disease, to lessen misery and hardness as far as he could, in the little space of his own environment. If it had been a good, whole world, with a healthy, true inside to it, what need of doctors, or administrators of justice, or preachers of a religion that should be inherent life, humanity's very heart-beat? Did not supplement and alleviation confess essential failure? What more could a man undertake to do than to fight? What was to come of the struggle at last — a saving or an annihilating — was not the affair of any man. He, surely, Ulick North, could have nothing to do with it.

But here was something come within his environment. Could he help this little girl? Might she, with her clear intuitions, her generous sincerity, which he began to concede in his judgment of her, so be sheltered, guided, strengthened, as to shake off girlish foible and the contagion of surrounding, as to come forth a woman of his highest imaging, a woman such as ought to be, such as he thought once he had found, only to have his belief so betrayed that love and belief had perished together?

Why was he caring? What could it possibly be to him?

It was a case — a question. It was something to watch, like a process in a laboratory; that was all.

When the plays were over, Dr. North put Estabel's cloak about her shoulders, and accompanied her and her companions to their carriage.

There were two in waiting for the party, — Mrs. Clymer's and one from the livery. The three young girls were put into this last, and Mrs. Clymer asked the doctor if he would be kind enough to accompany them to their two destinations.

Estabel gave the back seat to her guests and sat in the front with Ulick. He asked her if she were warm, and drew her cloak more closely about her. The spring wind was keen; there was Labrador ice in it.

"Was the play nice?" he asked her; and although three young voices broke forth together in delighted answer, she thought he meant the question especially for her, and that he was especially kind to her to-night.

They had to drive round to Hemlock Street, on the other side of the hill, to leave Kitty and Helen, who bade good-by with eager thanks. Then the carriage door was shut and Estabel was alone with Dr. North. He made her take the back seat, but kept his own. He leaned toward her presently, asking again with a slight difference, "*You liked it?* And which play was the best?"

"I don't know," Estabel answered with some carefulness. "Both together, they were beautiful. It seemed as if one just finished the other. I liked the kettle, and the Cricket, singing all along and keeping the secret. And Tilly Slowboy, finding out things and talking them over with the baby, as if they two were the only ones who could understand. 'And did its hair grow brown and curly when its cap was lifted off and frighten it a precious pets a sittin' by the fires?' Oh, that was lovely!"

Estabel laughed; but there was a little catch of pathos with the fun, as there is in Dickens.

Dr. North sat silent, which was not exactly his way if he had had enough of any special sort of talk. A smothered little sniff would escape him in such case, or he would start some utterly incoherent topic; the more insignificant in proportion that his interlocutor seemed more in earnest and likely to keep on. To-night he let Estabel keep on and listened leniently.

"And the Blind Girl, who really saw so much," she said, "and was n't cheated after all, because the beautiful

things she had believed in were all in her old father's heart for her and *real*! I think the theatre shows things all clear through, don't you?" Estabel was still carried away from herself; she was still gazing through the fallen curtain into yet unvanishing scenes, or she would hardly have uttered herself so unreservedly to impassive Dr. North.

"Perhaps," he answered her. "If one *looks* clear through."

The words startled Estabel just a little. It was so strange, she remembered, recalled from her self-abandonment by their uncontradictory tone, for him to meet any sentiment or opinion on lines of similar feeling or understanding. How good he was to-night not to spoil or argue away her pleasure!

And then, after a little silence, the carriage stopped at Number 84.

Sara Sullivant came into Estabel's room to help her undress and put her things away. Her help, which would never leave things scattered over night, or any way out of order, was doing more toward making Estabel orderly than any reprimand or penalty had ever done. It appealed directly to the sense of fitness and fidelity in herself. It identified these with her feeling of beauty; they were becoming a like and inseparable necessity to her. Sara was the embodiment of thoroughness and precision. Estabel had said to her once, "Sara, you'll never die of any *disorder*. You could n't have one. You'll just wear out in an eternal grind of regularity."

While Sara smoothed and folded and hung up, she asked questions. And Estabel poured out to her the whole story of each play, with graphic descriptions of effects and occasional dramatic illustration.

"But I want to know about *you*," Sara said at last. "What kind of a time did you have — between times, and off the stage? People don't go to the theatre only

just for the performance. Who was there? Who did you speak to?"

"Oh, there were ever so many people there we knew. At least, some we know, and more we only smatter at. And it was all very bright and splendid. Nearly all the girls I ever saw in Tophthorpe were there. Harry Henslee came and sat with us between the acts. And Dr. North rode home with the Goodwins and me."

"Dr. North *can* be polite — when there's nothing else to do. But did he say anything? I'd like to see how Dr. Ulick would behave shut up in a carriage with three girls."

"Oh, he was very kind and pleasant. He asked me how I liked the plays, and which I thought was the best. He seemed to like to hear what I thought about them."

"Did he tell you anything *he* thought?"

"Not much. He just said half a dozen words. But he did n't dispute."

"H'm! Six words from Dr. Ulick North — if they ain't disputin' an' sometimes if they air — is more than a whole chapter of Numbers from some folks. He don't trouble himself to say six words, unless there's six words' worth of something to say, or of somebody to say to. And he can't bear women — an' so, not girls — generally. They do tell he's had enough of 'em."

"I like to please people who are hard to please — if they're real," said Estabel. "Dr. North's real enough, and you have to be real with him."

"Yes. He's that. And I think he's as pleased with you, sometimes, as he's capable. That ain't much. But he puts up with you. An' maybe by the time you're full grown up, he'll get so he can put up with your bein' a woman. There was a man once carried a calf till it grew to be a ox."

At that Estabel laughed and jumped into bed. Sara bade her good-night, and went away.

For a long time she lay awake, living over the excitement which would not let her sleep, and considering those six words of Dr. Ulick.

"I think he looks clear through — most things," she said to herself. "That's what makes him a good doctor. Uncle Abel says he's 'great on diagnosis.' And that's why, I suppose, he's hard to please. I should be proud to grow up into a woman that Dr. Ulick could n't help liking."

The next day she wrote a long letter to Aunt Esther, describing her theatre evening all over again. And she put that last waking thought of hers about Dr. Ulick at the end of it.

Aunt Esther's answer came inclosed with a short business note to Mrs. Clymer. This was all there was in it: —

DEAR ESTABEL, — I'm glad you had a good time, and thank you for telling me about it. But as to seeing clear through anybody or anything, and as to Dr. Ulick North — Chooty-choo!

Your affectionate aunt,

ESTHER CHARLOCK.

CHAPTER XIX.

BY THE RIVER.

THE River Shawme pours its widening waters round the westerly end of Topthorpe. Parallel streets, of which Mount Street is one, run down to it. Northerly, the great bridges cross. Round from the seaward wharves on the east shore line, through the broad estuary up which rushes the salt tide that spreads out upon the marshes, come the lumber barges, or did come at the time of which we tell.

There were woodyards and carpenters' shops, and coal and lime wharves, on Shawme Street water-side. Right opposite the foot of Mount Street lay one of the lumber-yards. Its piles of new boards breathed out their memories of the pine woods in the June sunshine, as there is drawn from human spirits in some sweetly searching way the secret of an older life that stirs vaguely in them and exhales a mystic incense.

Estabel had never, until a certain morning in this June, walked all the way down Mount Street. The northwest winds of winter were too fierce across the wide water space, and up the exposed ascent. Her pleasure walks led elsewhere, and she had no errand down so far as Shawme Street.

But this morning she could not stay indoors, nor within any usual bounds. She wanted something new of all the new summer plenty and glory that were bursting and shining over the world. The great river invited her, gleaming radiant in the full light, the blue tips of its small innumerable waves breaking in golden

sparkles to the electric touch of the warm, live day, its ample flood sweeping broad from shore to shore, between streets and wharves on the hither margin and the soft stretches and rising slopes of a green countryside beyond.

As she went down the bricked sidewalk, Estabel's feet kept dancing measure with the tossing ripple of the stream upon which her eyes were held enchanted. She forgot the bricks; she forgot the overlooking and inclosing walls; she left the whole great city behind her; it rolled back from under her elastic steps. She emerged into a great freedom, a wonderful joy. Out there was the real, beautiful, wide world. There was a *Te Deum* going up from it. The sunlight flashed the words; the summer's wind sang them; the little waves sprang up gladly in their places, and lisped the antiphon: "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory!"

In Estabel's heart there was a full tide of tender pleasure.

She crossed Shawme Street straight to the pier. An arched boarding over a gateway where the trucks went in and out had painted on it "*R. Thistlestoke, Lum-ber, Wood, and Lime.*"

How sweet and clean it smelled here, with the hewn-down yet still living forest growths, the freshness of the river, and the grass scents drifted from opposite meadows!

She walked slowly down between the stacks of boards. She passed a little building upon which a lesser sign announced "*R. Thistlestoke, Office.*" A middle-aged man, almost elderly, with gray in his hair and spectacles upon his nose, sat writing at a desk beside a window, and glanced out over his glasses. Estabel wondered if this was *R. Thistlestoke*, and what he would think of her coming down there. But the spell was too strong upon her for any hesitating or turn-

ing back; probably R. Thistlestoke felt the shining of the morning also, and understood.

She went on, undisturbed, to the very end of the water wall; there she sat down on a clean, projecting plank, sheltered by the huge pile from which it conveniently protruded, and found herself alone, face to face with the river and the sky.

Poem and psalm drifted through her memory. She seemed to listen to them as she looked out upon the beauty and caught the softness of the sounds of breeze and wave, the plash at her feet of the still rising tide, and a far hum of busy city streets, so nearly hushed that it was not discordant.

"The Shawme! The Shawme! Our own imperial river!" appropriated itself from Mrs. Hemans's exulting Rhine song; and with the name came suggestion of the grand lines of the "Cantate Domino."

"With trumpets also and shawms,
O show yourselves joyful before the Lord, the king!
Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is:
The round world, and they that dwell therein.
For He cometh to judge the earth:
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity."

Every Sunday afternoon she heard this sung in church; now she felt it in the great psalm of nature, from which it was first drawn, and a strain of which reached even here, along beside the busy, common city street.

"Why did I never come here before?" she asked herself. "And why are n't half the Mount Street people down here to enjoy this morning? They just don't know. They are among the shops, plenty of them. The silks and ribbons in the windows are prettier to them than this blue roll of water, and that great curtain of blue sky, and the green velvet border of those fields. — The *earth* and the *world* are two such different

things! — And yet, that verse says, 'He cometh to judge — with righteousness, and with equity.' To make things even and right; I wonder if they really think it, Sundays, when they sing that psalm!"

Sitting quiet by the riverside, Estabel was launching forth upon deep waters. Deep always calls to deep.

She had sat there some half hour when the great bell of the church near by boomed out eleven strokes. Her aunt might miss her, though in this vacation time, but just begun, she had new privilege.

She rose to go, but stood lingering for a moment for a last look, a last breath. She had had the best of the morning. The cool shadow of the sheltering wood wall behind her was creeping to her feet. The sun was climbing high, and the blaze was already hot.

As she turned to go back the way she had come, a movement and a sound caused her to look around. From the farther side of a similar lumber pile to that which had served her own quiet comfort, a young girl, using a crutch, came into the aisle-like passage between, which Estabel was following.

The latter paused. Some one else had found the lovely place, had been sharing her own delight. Why might she not say how glad it was? This would not be like "speaking to strange girls on the street." They two had had it all together. Was n't it an acquaintance — knowing the same real, perfect thing?

And this was no Corinna Chilstone.

"What a beautiful face!" she almost exclaimed. But she only said brightly, "Good-morning!"

A flashing smile answered her as the girl came up.

"*Isn't* it a good morning!" she returned; and a pair of glorious eyes, under sunny brows and lashes, lightened with almost a golden gleam as they met Estabel's.

Olive-hazel — that soft tint before the nut quite ripens — these eyes were, as to their irids, with singular

fine aureate threads rayed close about their pupils, like the stamen-star at the heart of a flower, — so Estabel analyzed them afterward; but few found out the canny secret of their coloring; and there was no need, for the shadow and the light were both moved from within and made them sometimes gently, but always sweetly, grave, and sometimes translucent as amber with a beautiful joy.

Her dress was a plain brown gingham; the ribbon at the throat, under a white collar, was drawn through an old-fashioned brooch of gold, formed in a circle, that held the knot in its centre. Her shady straw hat had a brown ribbon twisted round it, whose edges were a golden colored cord. And her hair, that fell richly about her face and behind her ears in natural wavy masses kept just short enough to be so worn, was itself russet-golden. She was all soft brown and gold, all sweet soberness and light. That was how Estabel first saw her; it was what she always afterwards found her to be. Her eyes, and more than her eyes, were satisfied with a rare, strange pleasure.

"Have you just found this place, like me?" she asked, dropping back to walk beside the newcomer.

"Oh, no!" the girl laughed. "I belong here almost. I come here every pleasant day since I got well of my broken leg. It left me a little weak, and so they turn me out loose. Mr. Thistlestoke is a friend of my father's. He gets all his lumber here — my father, I mean. He's a carpenter — a housebuilder. We live round in Shawme Street, close by."

"I live in Mount Street with my aunt, Mrs. Clymer. I've been going to school all last winter; and I never knew about this lovely place before. I feel as if I had discovered America over again."

"I guess people are always discovering — or might be if they knew how. There's such a great deal in the world. Isn't there?"

"Yes. Sometimes it worries me to think of all that's beyond my reach; and then, again, I'm glad that it's all there, and I've only just begun, and can never come to the end of it."

"To the *end*—no. But it's all for everybody, some time, my grandmother says."

A shadow fell on Estabel's face. "I have n't either a mother or a grandmother," she said. "I never had—to know. I've only aunts. And they're just as different as they can be. But they're very good to me," she added quickly. "Only I think it takes the mothers and the grandmothers to quite understand, and explain for you."

"My mother is dead, too. But my grandmother says I'm my mother and myself, both, to her. And I'm sure she's that kind of a mother to me that means both."

"Won't you please tell me your name?"

"Oh, yes. Lilian Hawtree. Elizabeth Anne, really. But they put it all together and called me Lilian while my mother was alive because it was her name, too; and so I'm Lilian now."

She did not ask Estabel's name in return. Frank and sweet as she was, she knew the little outside difference there was between the carpenter's shop and Shawme Street, and the house of some rich man, doubtless, up among the people on the hill. She waited, but Estabel did not let her wait.

"I am Estabel Charlock. Now we know each other. May I come down here again and talk with you?"

"Oh, I wish you would. I'm just a little lonesome, sometimes, after somebody of my own age. You see I'm not quite strong, and the girls round here play games that I don't care for, and I don't know very many people. Grandmother is particular. Everybody's particular in the city—in different ways; or else—they are n't particular at all, and that is worse."

The two parted at the corner of Shawme and Mount streets.

But a friendship had been born there, that June morning, among the sweet-smelling lumber piles by the blue Shawme River. Two young human souls, as had been meant, had found each other.

CHAPTER XX.

WHICH END IS THE REMNANT?

"It is just the difference between a lot of little round shot, rolling about together, and a few drops of quick-silver," said Estabel.

"What is just that, may I ask?" inquired Dr. Ulick, coming in from the dining-room, where his Uncle Clymer had been showing him some plans and papers.

"The difference between people you are acquainted with and those you know," Estabel answered.

"She knows a new girl — intimately; she has seen her three times," Harry Henslee explained, laughing.

"She's the sweetest girl I've seen in Tophthorpe."

"She is a carpenter's daughter down in Shawme Street."

Estabel and her aunt made these respective declarations to the world in general, not looking at each other. Mrs. Clymer drew a long thread of wool from the light heap in her lap-basket, and plied her ivory needles rapidly.

"Jesus Christ was a carpenter."

"Don't be irreverent, Estabel."

"No, aunt, I'm not. But I think if Jesus Christ was alive — I don't mean *that*," she corrected indignantly, as she caught the irrepressible flicker of a smile on Dr. North's face — "who's irreverent now, I wonder? — I mean, if He was here in this city, as he was in Jerusalem, there isn't a house he'd go to sooner than Mr. Hawtree's. Nor where they'd be more fit to have him."

"Estabel, I think you have said enough."

Then Estabel became quiet. She knew that she had spoken her true words too audaciously, and might perhaps so have lost her cause.

She bent her head over her own work, which was the covering little cardboard lozenges with bits of silk. A basket full of them, cut to match each other, lay upon a little stool beside her. For a few minutes she was as retired within herself as if there had not been others in the room. Then Dr. North came round and placed himself on a sofa end behind her low chair.

Harry Henslee had watched her quizzically, with a mind to a like move, but was just too late. Mr. Clymer had come in from the other room and joined the group about the large centre table, over which a resplendent chandelier shed its abundant light. He brought with him his book of plans, and said something to Harry about his father, and a proposed meeting the next night of the investors in the undertaking the drawings represented, of which company the elder Mr. Henslee was one. And when Mr. Clymer began talking of this great scheme for the improvement of the "Round," which should build it up into a "Place" of elegant dwellings and plant a new fashionable nucleus, it was not easy to escape the subject, or to make an available pause.

"Mrs. Clymer and you seem to be weaving and patching rainbows," said Ulick to Estabel. "Is all this work for the 'Snips'?"

"Looks like it, does n't it? Yes. It's for the great Remnants and Snips Fair. Aunt Vera is knitting up a 'Magic Ball' into what Sara Sullivant calls a 'variegated African;' and these" (running her fingers under the pile of silken scraps and tossing up a brilliant confusion) "are to be a grand divan cover in perspective blocks. We shall raffle it for fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars' worth of snipped-up time," remarked the doctor. "I wonder what snips and remnants truly

are! Something you have to make first — out of whole cloth — or what really happens to get left of anything?"

"Aunt Vera, what are remnants?" Estabel handed over the question to Mrs. Clymer, breaking amicably with a new subject the silence that had fallen somewhat glumly upon that lady.

"Things left over."

"After what? I've often wondered where the using ended and the left-over began."

"When you've got all you want, I suppose, and there's a little more than you can do anything with."

Dr. North saw that the conversation was getting on very well without him, and sat back, complacently listening.

"Aunt Vera, it seems to me that the left-over might very often be the biggest piece."

Ulick laughed.

"What do you apply that to?" asked Mrs. Clymer.

"Why, to the definition of our snips and remnants. They were to be of time and money and thought that we did not need for ourselves. And I do believe we measure them off at the wrong end very often."

"Where would you measure them?"

"I don't know. It's quite likely I should measure them as other people do, — a great big plenty for myself, and scraps and parings for the rest. But it does n't seem to me as if that was the way it was meant. There were twelve baskets full picked up, you know. Just as much as those twelve men could carry, I suppose. And that was after they had divided round all they had at first. I wish it told what they did with *them*."

"The baskets full? Kept on dividing, somehow, probably — don't you think?" put in Dr. Ulick.

"There was something for some of those five thousand to carry home — even after they were no longer hungry. It's a pretty apologue."

"An apologue is a fable, is n't it?" demanded Estabel with a challenging surprise.

"Well, a fable is a guise of truth. We won't go into that just now. Please let us know which end of the cloth you consider the remnant."

"I think it must be all that we don't actually need to cut off for ourselves."

"And then what?"

"Why, cut for other people, just as long as it will hold out."

"And never store away?"

"Not much. Perhaps not any — if we're making new cloth all the time."

"Rank communism!" exclaimed the doctor. But there was a twinkle in his eye, half frankly sympathetic, half sardonically diverted.

"They'll be a splendid lot of houses. And not too many of them. It will be the making of this new part of the city. You'll live in one of them, yourself, a few years hence, Harry, as likely as not. This is to be the court end of Tophthorpe. — See here, all of you. We want a name for the new Place," said Mr. Clymer, turning round with his last words toward the three others.

Dr. North found time to say to Estabel that which he had really come beside her to say.

"You've come across a new Cinderella, have n't you?" he asked her. "Are you going to turn Fairy Godmother?"

"There's a Godmother already," Estabel answered.

"The most beautiful, dear, old — no, not old at all — she's fresh and new and makes everything else so — *Grand-mother!* But there's no time to tell you about her now."

And they fell into the discussion over the name of the fine new Square, as expected.

"Why not 'Clymer'?" suggested Dr. North.

Uncle Abel looked pleased. "Oh, there are half a

dozen others with as good a right — perhaps," he said. "To be sure, I'm the largest shareholder. But we don't intend to make it personal. I've thought of 'Westmarch Place.' It isn't a Square, you know. It's to be an arc — or a bow — open at this end. We've taken in the lots this side of Clover Street. It will be thoroughly quiet and retired — all to itself. There's *privilege* in it, you see — *limited* privilege, and folks will always pay for that. Oh, it's a noble scheme! It means a twelve per cent. interest to investors, on five years' leases; to say nothing of doubling ultimate values. No *sales*, mind you, under ten years. And now for a name."

"Why not call it 'Privilege Place'?" said Harry.

"Or 'Monopoly,' or 'Prerogative'?" added the doctor, intensifying Harry's joke to an absurdity that could not possibly be taken gravely.

"Why not just 'The Arc'?" asked Estabel.

"Wherein eight souls — or a few more — are to be saved out of the common lot?" whispered Dr. North.

Mr. Clymer did not hear that; he answered Estabel literally. "It is n't bad; but it hardly specifies sufficiently. We want it to have *quality* — name and all."

"Ah, the old Ark missed it!" Dr. North persisted, in his private *sotto voce*.

Estabel laughed quietly, and said "hush!" enjoying very much, nevertheless, the little confidential fun with the dour doctor. Then aloud, to her uncle, "Perhaps 'The Zodiac' would do. Only that's a circle, I believe."

"An imaginary band," said Dr. North, "in which the chief constellations are supposed to be set, and among which the sun has his path. But it isn't of much use in our advanced astronomy; and the name comes from 'zoo,' you know, which is a garden of animals."

Everybody laughed at that. Mr. Clymer shut up

his book of drawings. "I want real suggestions," he said, with a slight irritation.

"Really, then, Uncle Abel," said Estabel, "I would n't call it anything that refers to shape or build-ings or imaginary circles. I'd make it sound sweet and delightful, somehow. Why not 'West Gardens' ? The houses are all to have gardens, and the Round will be a middle garden for the whole."

"It's the best yet," declared Mr. Clymer in a cheer-fully altered tone; and he took up his plans and carried them off.

Ulick North did not forget Estabel and her Cinder-ella. He got a word about that matter presently with Mrs. Clymer.

"I think you may trust her to take a good deal of her own way," he told Aunt Vera. "She won't go so far wrong in such directions, as she might in some others. She is full of fancy, and it must take hold of something. I happen to know these Hawtrees. I visited them in my early practice, with Dr. Sayward. And the young girl is a recent patient of mine; she had a broken leg. They are quite safe people, satisfied where they belong. It would be an isolated case of intimacy if it came to that."

"Oh, I suppose it does n't matter much. It may be a safety valve, as you say. Only one never really knows where a girl like Estabel will stop. I dare say this would naturally, however, be separate from any-thing else. There would be no actual clashing nor mixing up. In fact, it's a kind of charity visiting."

Dr. North let it rest with that. He did not tell Mrs. Clymer that Lilian Hawtree was a young girl such as one has in Topthorpe but a few, sift and winnow as people may. Such positive praise, or even unqualified opinion, was hardly characteristic of him. Neither, in this instance, would it be likely to take effect; and Dr. North knew how to suit his therapeutics to his cases.

Harry's father came in, and this brought back Mr. Clymer, his head still full of the great project, and fresh talk followed. Dr. North lingered.

Mrs. Clymer sat back comfortably, and listened, knitting her long rows, drawing out her wool, and changing her needles, always to repeat the self-same stitches, back and forth. It was like her life. The ball of wool was big; the soft, continuous thread was ready to her hand without a break or snarl, the colors cunningly apportioned in a preconceived order; she had only to keep on picking up her loops and taking care to drop none.

Her little talk with Ulick had relieved her. She was always glad to settle things easily. No great harm could be done by letting them run awhile just now. Estabel was to spend the month of July with her Aunt Esther at Stillwick, and for August Aunt Vera had another plan. When school began again and winter came, all would fall into the old routine. There would be no sitting by the river then.

But Mrs. Clymer did not fully understand the difference between leaden shot and drops of quicksilver.

Across her thoughts broke disjointedly the accompaniment of business explanations in business phrase.

Mrs. Clymer did not trouble herself about understanding much of such details. If the results came round to her in their successes, like the yarn from the magic ball into the graded tints of her pretty work, it was enough.

Mr. Clymer's affairs were growing complicated. Greatly enlarged in the few years since her first acquaintance with him, she could not expect to comprehend them all. The original occupation in trade which had been the foundation of his prosperity had been gradually given over to other hands, he retaining only a certain capital interest; and brokering and banking, joint-stock operations and enterprises, were absorbing his faculties and facilities, and thus far doubling and

redoubling his ventures and investments. His wife was satisfied with the outline of facts. When he talked to her of business, she knitted and listened and smiled, as likely as not considering in her mind the color, cut, and trimming of a new dress, or the possibility of a set of jewels, while he argued chances, proved certainties, and reckoned percentages. All she asked to know was the how much he was putting in, and the how much he would get out.

To-night, she heard the words "architects' estimates," "specifications," "contracts," "sub-contracts," "margin for overrun," etc., etc., as so many merely mechanical minutiae which concerned only the competent, responsible parties, as the stitching of her gowns was the concern of her dressmaker. She took the subject, like that, in its final effect; complacent that her husband was the leader and organizer of weighty undertakings, the substantial carrying out of which was to bear witness, in this instance, to his consequence, before her very windows, in the sight of all Mount Street.

She had no least idea of how Estabel Charlock was listening, trying to comprehend, and was swaying to a moral judgment of all these things, as question and answer developed their method and intent in the conversation about her.

Dr. North stayed by, evidently held by interest in the renewed discussion. That was simply natural, for a man, she thought, and Mr. Clymer's nephew.

"All under one inclusive contract?" she heard him ask.

"Yes. Brace and Buckle take the whole. Then they sub-let, in jobs, to builders. With all that we have nothing to do. Thoroughgood and Strong wanted it, but Brace and Buckle underbid; a difference of nine thousand."

"And then there comes a second question of lowest bids, with the mechanics, I suppose. Goes through

two sieves, if not more. Chance for some losing on the way, is n't there?"

"Always that, of course, if people don't look out. It's for every man to see to for himself."

Estabel searched Dr. North's face for the understanding of this, which was beyond her grasp. She saw a hard half smile curl his lips downward at the corners. She knew he despised something; she wondered what. She saved that wonder up till she should see him next, and could make a question of it. The present opportunity was nearly over.

Mr. Henslee looked at his watch. "Well, Harry?" he said, and rose. In ten minutes the visitors were all gone, and the family in their rooms.

The next time came next day. Estabel met Dr. North on Mount Street as she turned Linden Street corner, coming back from a shopping errand.

"I hope you are coming in," she said, as they walked down the long block together.

"Not this time," he answered. "I've a call to make and then an office appointment. A doctor is n't his own man."

"I've been wondering if anybody's his own man. I wanted to ask you a question. It was about the talk last night. What are those contracts? And what do they mean by 'lowest bids'? And why must anybody lose?"

"That is a big subject. A contract is an agreement, to furnish a certain material, or to do a certain piece of work in a certain way, for a certain price. The people who want the material, or to have the work done, call for bids; the man who will undertake the business for the least money gets the bargain. Then, if it's a large affair, he calls for other bids, for separate parts, and gives them out again at the lowest price. Probably if he has had to underbid riskily himself, he must make it up, if he can, by cheapening the jobs under him."

"And then what do *they* do — the jobbers?"

"Scamp the work — sometimes — unless they're watched too sharply. Or cheapen the material. Or make an honest bad business of it for themselves, and go under."

"Seems to me it is a plan to make bad business, all through. Isn't there any other way?"

"There's work by the day, but that is always costly. When people are paid for time, they are very likely to take time."

"Is every kind of work like that? And every kind of business? Is everybody trying to get it out of the others? And is that how people grow rich?"

Estabel poured the questions forth impetuously. They were coming near their own corner.

"It is impossible to make a general statement cover all that," said Dr. Ulick. "That involves the whole moral and practical history of trade and human service, and all the problems of political economy."

"I should think it involved the whole New Testament and the Ten Commandments," said Estabel gravely. "Are n't you glad you are a doctor?"

"That's a good deal like the old lady who said it took all sorts of people to make the world, and she was terrible glad she was n't one of 'em," said the doctor, smiling. "Why should I be glad to be a doctor?"

They were now at the marble steps of No. 84.

"Because you really do your best every time, and you just get paid for that."

"Don't think too well of us. We get paid for our time, too. It's often a little too easy to extend the account."

"I don't believe" — Estabel began; but she could not tell that man to his face what she did not think him capable of. And just then Archibald answered her ring.

She turned upon the steps as Dr. North lifted his hat. He was always carefully polite.

"I think I know one thing, now," she said, looking down at him.

"What is that?" he asked; his raised hat and lingering attitude marking the interrogation.

"Where the 'Remnant' comes. I think it must be at the twelve per cent. interest end."

As Dr. North walked down the street he said to himself, "I wonder if she will think so if ever a twelve per cent. interest comes into her hands. The world is a test crucible."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GLADMOTHER.

"GLADMOTHER will be sitting among her rainbows."

"What is it you call her?"

"Gladmother. When I was little I could n't say 'Grand.' I had to leave out the 'n,' and turn the 'r' into an 'l.' So it made just what she ought to be called, you see; you *will* see; and we've kept it up. But we don't call her so except among ourselves."

"Thank you, dear."

And then Lilian, who held Estabel's arm as they walked along Shawme Street, gave it a warm little squeeze.

It was a Sunday afternoon. Estabel had only once been in the Hawtrees' house, and then half accidentally, so that there had been but a brief stop and talk. She would not sit down and visit, until she had leave from her own home. Now she had been made conditionally free. "I don't care, so long as you don't mix things," Mrs. Clymer had said. "And so long as you don't give up everything else."

Aunt Vera could not have been more diplomatic if she had intended diplomacy of the farthest-reaching sort. Estabel could have had no more impelling motive for considering her aunt's pleasure in other directions and on other occasions, which were pretty certain to be comparatively exceptional, than her appreciation of this accordance of liberty for what she began to call to herself her "every-day times."

She had not seen the Gladmother among her rain-

bows. As yet she knew her chiefly through Lilian's portrayal and quotation, and the peculiar reflection in Lilian herself of beautiful and gracious influence that it was plain had come to her no otherwise than by this nearness and dearness of beautiful and gracious life.

Lilian took her friend straight upstairs to-day. In a room that looked to south and west — warm in winter from the unbroken sunlight and cool in summer from the unobstructed river breezes — they came upon a sweetness and a presence of which even every inanimate thing therein was full.

There was very little that seemed inanimate. Only the needful supports and appliances of chairs, tables, bed, water-stand, that having each its own office to render belonged directly to use and life, and being for their respective purposes of the most absolute simple fitness and daintiness, became symbolic; representative not through show of luxury or fancy, but through pure relation, of all freshness, sweetness, and repose. One passed them over in regard, as one does the features of a pleasant, harmonious face, only gathering from them their full expression of the finer things of very life itself.

In the windows were baskets, not pots, of ferns; these stood over china jars, into which the water dripped with which they were frequently and generously showered, to their beautiful delight; this constant drainage, like that natural to them in their woodland nooks by stream sides, rooted in light, spongy soil among the mossy rocks, kept them as under the spray and plash of a waterfall, always moist, but never sodden. "I could not let my ferns be homesick," the Gladmother would say.

Their delicate springing fronds were lifted high until the slender stems could no longer sustain uprightness, and then they drooped until of themselves they made a green cascade from stand to floor. Maiden-hairs, in side brackets, from which, in turn, superfluous moisture

trickled to the fern baskets underneath, rounded their plumes into clouds of tenderest mingled shades; the little outspread palms of their myriad leaflets showing deep green in their hollows, and a golden life-tint at their infinitely tiny finger-tips. Small pots of violets and mignonette were hidden in the greenery, and the sweet smell of them was in the air.

"She manages to keep them all the year round," said Lilian.

"I don't try to cultivate difficult flowers," the Gladmother said. "Ferns are always here and always beautiful; an open window is as good to them as all out doors; they only want light and water, and enough fresh air to breathe. When the sun is full upon them I draw those little green screens behind them, and let my sunbeams come in above, as I may want them. I never shut them wholly out if I can possibly help it, because I want my rainbows."

In each window a silken cord was suspended midwise from a hook, its two ends holding tassels of prismatic crystal; richly faceted balls and drops that had once adorned some grand old chandelier. The cord could be slipped at pleasure to raise and lower these clear refractors to such points in the light as would let them scatter their wonderful radiances most charmingly. The Gladmother knew well where she loved best to have them touch and linger in the room about her.

In a quiet corner stood an old-fashioned easy chair with high, cushioned sides and back, in which one felt instinctively some dear invalid must many a time have rested; perhaps some long fading life, tenderly ministered to, have lingered itself peacefully away. Beside it stood a little table, whose top could be turned round across the chair front. On this were a cup and plate, a little cordial glass and silver spoon, and an old-fashioned heavy watch with fob chain and seal, hung to a silver tripod stand.

Somebody had used and hallowed the things; they stood here, sacred. The watch, kept faithfully wound, ticked away the time until, perhaps, the other appointments might again be made last use of, in love and holy memorial. It was like a little Sacrament table.

Upon the wall above the chair there was a picture, — the lovely face of a woman. Young, tender, serene. Estabel guessed, what Lilian told her later, that it was the picture of the mother who had died long years before.

A shaft of rainbow light shot in broken gleams almost from floor to ceiling up through the quiet corner. It touched the chair foot with a crimson flame; it rested on the top, where a head might rest, in soft, clear amber; above the sweet face in the picture it quivered from out the shadowy background in a violet bloom that shaped itself like the petals of a purple flower. Below or beside this shimmered a soft green; underneath flashed a keen fire sparkle of pure gold. Something — a candlestick upon the corner of a chiffonier, which betrayed its intervention by a burnish of strange color — had caught back fragments of the ray, so that it shivered at last into this wonderful semblance that painted itself symbolically upon the canvas. The glory-blossom lay close above the clustering hair; it seemed to set itself gently among the rimpled locks; it was a flower and a star together.

"Mamma has got a pansy in her hair," said Lilian.

"It comes there every day," answered the Glad-mother tenderly.

Over on the white pillows of the bed were dropped faint, sweet flushes of pink, as if rose leaves had been scattered; and across upon the farther wall the rest of the beautiful chord declared itself, — the fire tints, and the saffron and the beryl. Overhead was a long, slender pencil of the perfect hues, from faintest rose to melting amethyst; here and there were disks and dashes detached and separate; they fell on floor, on furnishings,

on any little thing that was in the sun-path; sometimes like molten drops, sometimes like living tongues of flame. One tender little gleam kissed the rim of Gladmother's cap and the silver of her folded hair, and she did not know it until Lilian told her. On the open page of her large-print Prayer Book that lay beside her, had come an illumination of pure, vivid blue; strangely enough — if anything is ever strange that happens to the touching of our higher apprehension — flooding the text of message and gospel for Trinity Sunday so lately past, whose word the Gladmother dearly loved to turn to the year round, — where the sea of glass, and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, and the rainbow like an emerald round about, and the pavement of sapphire as the body of heaven in his clearness, are written of and brought to mind.

Nothing was strange; it was all most beautifully, naturally accordant; but when Estabel saw the splendid transparent color on the book, and came near and read, the lines were as instant and miraculous revelation.

"Why, the light is what the words say!" she exclaimed. "They were read only the other Sunday, and I hardly noticed! It seems as if the sign had come straight down!"

The Gladmother smiled. "That is what I always think," she said; "and why I love so to let the rainbows in. But I don't think so much of their coming down, as of their *shining out*. Colors and sweet smells just breathe and flash from the life behind, that we don't see, or know ourselves alive in."

"Oh, that's just what puzzles me," said Estabel. "Where *do* we live?"

"You've lived in the country, have n't you?" asked the Gladmother. "Well, how does the city seem?"

"I think it seems as if it had no inside to it. You can't get in under the bricks. What is underneath the stones and behind the show?"

"Just what is everywhere, under and inside of every thing. It is the Heart-World."

"Who knows anything about it?"

"Ah, that's the question. That's what Nicodemus wanted to know, and did n't even know he wanted it. We've got to have two kinds of sight, and two kinds of hearing, and two kinds of feeling. And yet it has got to be all one, seen and heard and felt together; as our two eyes and our two ears see and hear together, and our outside touch joins to our inside understanding."

"Well, I guess there are a good many people deaf and blind and sick of the palsy."

"So there were when the Word came—and the Light—and the Power. He opened their eyes and their ears, and He sent his life through their dead bodies. He does it now. He is doing it all the time; because He is alive, in the Heart-World, and we are alive by Him. Don't you remember how He touched the eyes of the blind man *twice*? He opened first the outside sight, and then the inside. First, the man only saw other men as trees walking; and then he saw every *man* clearly. That's the way the world—and the people—look to us, while we only half see—just things, and a life among things, until we get into the Heart-World, and live in the spirit."

The two young girls sat quiet. The words, so simply spoken, were great with a deep experience, and touched them in their deepest, hardly conscious nature. The dear old lady was not in a hurry to say more. Whenever she spoke in this wise, it was always as if something said itself. Something beyond her uttered it. The ignorant apostles spoke with tongues.

"In all these things is the visitation of thy spirit," she repeated softly, a minute or two after. "Colors and sounds and pleasant smells and tastes are all just next to the heavenly. They are fine and tender; you

can't take hold of them. They are the secrets of our Father, the thoughts of Him toward us. Our five senses are doors into holy chambers. The sweeter the secrets are, the tenderer they show and feel. What are flowers born out of? They are made into something that will hardly bear a touch. They just open into sight with the least making that we can possibly see them by. Look through a rose leaf. It is nothing but small dew and color. I don't know the philosophy of it; but I think the flowers and leaves are of the nature of my prisms, only a thousand times more delicate; their whole substance is of little water crystals set together to catch every one its own particular kind of light, and show us how beautiful it can be, with the *thought*-beauty of bright red and soft yellow and purple and blue and green. I think it is something, actually, of the light of the Heavenly City. And when I smell a violet, I think it is alive with the air the angels breathe."

"Why, Mrs. Trubin, if people lived like that it would be heaven!"

"Yes," replied Gladmother Trubin quietly; "that is what it's meant to be. 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

"I wish, then," said Estabel after a little silence, "there need n't be so *many* outsides. They're a great bother. They're always in the way. You can't get rid of them."

All Estabel's difficulties came rushing like eager applicants for some suddenly presented relief. They all wanted answer.

"I think you mean false outsides," said the Gladmother.

"I suppose I do. They're all mixed up. I think they're worst of all in church, where you go to get inside. You know they have no business, and it's wicked. You want to leave them out and you can't.

You can't get inside, nor stay. There they all are, — the bonnets and the gowns and the nice gloves holding the Prayer Books, and the way people do their hair. I'm always noticing; and then the words slip away and are gone, and the chance is over, and I have n't realized anything at all. Down there by the river the other day, the Te Deum and the Psalm just came to me. They were in the water and the air and the sunshine."

"God's outsides. Yes. We make our own, a great deal too much. They crowd his out. That's what the Second Commandment is against. Some outsides we have to make. But we need n't *stop* in them. We need n't fall down and worship them. When human souls are together, especially in church, I think they might remember that underneath clothes — and bodies — are hearts and lives, and the world they make and belong to — all their wants and wishes, and pains and gladness, and troubles and loves — a great moving, breathing world of spirits — the real world — in which the Father of spirits dwells with us, and where we find Him face to face. If you could feel into all that, you'd realize the words, would n't you?"

"Oh, yes! If people would! If you knew they did all round you. But you know they don't."

"How?"

"Just by your own not feeling. You could n't help it if they did."

"I am not sure about that. Even if they were all blind, they *are* there; and the Lord looks upon the heart of every one of them. At any rate, there's the help in the very prayers. It's all provided for. 'From all blindness of heart' — from *not* seeing in, and feeling, together — 'from pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy' — the things that hinder — 'Good Lord, deliver us!'"

"I think it would be good to keep saying that all the time."

"One can. There is always some one thing we need especially; and remembering it all through helps all the rest."

"You know *how* to go to church, Mrs. Trubin!"

"Maybe I've learned more about it since I could n't go."

"Do people always have to learn things at the wrong time? I beg your pardon — I did n't mean you — but I always seem to."

"There is n't ever a wrong time, except the times we make wrong. Everything will fit together — in the Lord's time. We live in little bits. But we are to bring the pieces to Him. He knows what to do with them; even the pieces we have broken."

"The Remnants," said Estabel thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROSES AND RHODODENDRONS.

ESTABEL and Lilian had walked down across Old Park. There was an errand at a thread store, but there was no hurry about that. They could have an hour together if they chose; they would do their errand first, and the rest should be pure enjoyment.

It could hardly be else, anywhere, that summer day. The world, even the city world, was beautiful. The very smell of the streets, as the great water carts sprinkled them freshly, was a reminder of sweet open earth after a shower; and here in the Park the greenness and the quietness were something kept sacred from all confusing and "covering up" with which the city could offend.

They were happy, as two girls in a young, intimate friendship only are; in a simple frankness of delight, untouched by any disquietude, uncertainty, or mystery, that may stir an after experience; when they are in the morning together, and all the day looks dewy-fresh and clear.

Lilian's crutch was a thing of weeks past. It was so good, she said, to have two feet again, instead of three. And Estabel laughed, and called her "Goody Two-Shoes."

In the Lower Mall they met Dr. North.

"Going to see the roses, young ladies?" he asked them as he greeted them pleasantly.

"Roses? Where?" said Estabel.

"Why, right over here where everybody is going to-day. In the Hall of Plants. Roses and rhododendrons. If you'll come, I'll show you."

So he led them along, across the wide avenue, and into the large open vestibule of the Hall building. People stood there in groups, meeting by appointment or by accident, chatting and bowing, buying tickets, proceeding in detachments or singly up the short, wide staircase.

Halfway, as Dr. North and the two young girls ascended in their turn, their movement was checked by a stoppage at the upper doorway. A lady behind them had put her foot upon the step they had reached when the slight backward surge of the temporary crowd obliged them to give way. Estabel felt herself pushed against and displacing some one. She turned, as well as she could, to apologize. "I'm very sorry," she said. "I could not help it."

"Of course you could not," a pleasant voice answered; and Estabel smiled, not directly at the speaker, for whom the smile was meant, but from the constraint of her position right into the cold, ignoring face of Corinna Chilstone, accompanying her aunt, Mrs. Brithwaite, the same lady who had liked Pen Westington for being so cordial.

"Did n't you know that young girl?" Estabel heard Mrs. Brithwaite ask presently, as they gained the top and stood within the entrance door from the landing, while the others were still detained at the collector's table. "I thought she recognized you, and that I had seen her face before."

"Very likely. She goes to Mr. Satterwood's, I believe. But you don't know a girl just because you happen to go to the same school with her. In Topthorpe we are apt to have seen almost anybody's face before."

"Oh! I suppose so. And one can't have all of everything; there's a good deal of the best that gets missed, no doubt," returned Mrs. Brithwaite.

To which keen little speech Corinna made no answer.

She did not always find it quite easy to answer Aunt Brithwaite; neither was she always altogether comfortable with her, though she liked to be seen with her, and was particular to call her "Aunt *Brithwaite*," rather than "Aunt Frances," because she was an ex-governor's widow, and not simply Mrs. Chilstone's sister.

The dock grows beside the nettle. The kindness veiled in the rebuke neutralized the virulence of the sting. Estabel felt actually grateful for the one in the comfort of the other. Even a nettle has its involuntary relative use. And yet only a donkey can love a thistle.

But she forgot it all as they came into that world of sweetness and light. There was nothing of this best that she need miss. The key of its inner revelation had been given her.

"I am so glad we had that talk with the Gladmother before we came here," she whispered to Lilian. And then neither of them spoke again for many minutes.

A broad passageway ran round — if one may say round — the long oval which occupied the middle of the floor. This was formed of benches, tier above tier, filled with the loveliest blooms. The lower range was all of pansies, — a crowd of leaning, nodding, laughing little flower faces, beautiful in purples, in gold and citron and amber, in bronzy brown and palest straw color, in pure white with golden hearts and purple dashes at their petal bases, in velvety black, in faint, sweet lavender; from all the subtle breath arising that like a whisper of perfume one had to bend down to catch and distinguish from more accented fragrances. Above these were banked the heliotropes, in shaded ripeness of soft color, from the least tint of violet to the deepest amethyst; clouded and mixed in their arrangement, showing in relief of the strong, rich leafage; exhaling a redundancy of delicious odor; holding the eye in a pause of satisfied rest, and the sense in a dream of luxuriousness, before

they should be lifted to the supreme sweetness, the royal magnificence of the queen of flowers. The topmost level was the throne of the Roses.

"Eyes left," said the doctor, as they passed slowly around with the throng. "Don't look at the other side yet. Take in each thing by turn. It's like reading a book. You don't want to skip, or see what's coming."

Indeed, they had no wish, except that the congregation might file past even more slowly.

Every rose that had ever learned to bloom, or that horticulture yet knew, seemed there; names were useless, even if they could be known; one only thought of the wondrous, varied miracle; of the mysterious choice by which each took its own glorious or dainty color; how the rich, brilliant crimson drew the wine of its splendid life into apparition; how the sunshine sphered itself in the bright yellow; how it softened as to twilight beauty in the delicate sulphur and saffron; how the tender blushing rose, the native, individual, primal hue, asserted itself sweetly in the midst of all, lovely, lovable as ever; how the long tea-buds bowed their heads in very fullness, modest in exquisite sheathing of cream, or verd-white, or buff, or coral-pink petals; how their little message was breathed subtly in an aroma which no other knew, as if it were a specially intrusted secret; how they were all so different, and yet every one was a Rose.

"How does it all come so?"

Estabel hardly asked the question; it escaped her; but Dr. North was at her side, and thought she spoke to him.

"The laws of life — of growth, assimilation, adaptation. Men study them, and try experiments — encouragement and selection in various lines; differentiation and development follow. There scarcely seems any end to it."

"But there is a beginning. It must have all been hid away — the possible of it — in the first Rose."

"Doubtless. The earth itself was a seed."

"Oh, how wonderful! And the earth brought forth grass, and herb, and tree, *with their seeds in themselves*. That is what the Bible says."

They were speaking very low, standing close together with the crowd about them. Other voices were busy with other talk. Dr. North said no more for a moment; but almost in a whisper, Lilian quoted, "'He giveth it a body as it hath pleased him; and to every seed his own body.' Gladmother says that means He planned it all from the beginning and gives it every time."

Dr. North looked at the young girl. Her simple faith was in her face.

"That is a very happy way of thinking," he said to her gently. But he spoke as if from outside of what she meant. And of course they could not go far with such conversation here and now.

"We have got round," he told them. "Now turn your backs upon the roses and see the opposite side."

They had known that a great mass of flowers and foliage was there. But they had resolutely refrained from mixing their impressions. They had been shown a better way. Now they moved into line on the right side of the aisle, and came full upon the glory that was like a builded wall around the whole.

The crowd was thinning. People were going home to dinner and to other engagements. They could loiter; they could see from side to side. The entire ellipse was visible; lined to the high clerestory windows with the glistening green of the laurel leaves and the clustered heads of gorgeous bells that the "trees of roses" bore.

Neither of them said a word. The word was all in the mute, rich, abundant sign.

Pure masses of white, sweetly splendid flushes of rose, deep crimson in high background like a cathedral reredos, all supported and filled in by the shiningly dense foliage, there was no blank nor gap nor any incompleteness. Strangest, most perfect effect of all, there was seemingly no bound. There were no walls. It was a forest, whose limit was simply its own impenetrableness. Clerestory and glassed roof poured down the daylight straight from a blue heaven.

"Well?" said Dr. North at last. "What is it like, Estabel?"

"Oh! so many things! Like a great oratorio in full chorus, I think. I was listening—as much as looking."

"Are you glad you came?"

"I forgot I did come. It seemed as if somewhere—wherever I was—it all appeared."

"Which is a free translation of what people mean when they say, It is a vision."

"And in the vision they always hear a voice."

"I suppose there is a language in everything; a music, perhaps. But there's where we can't penetrate. It is a suggestion—an imagination; one thing reminds us of another. We have only our five senses to prove anything by, and they are limited."

Estabel did not answer, but she thought of the Glad-mother's words about that.

Presently the doctor said, "But we must go," and then they went realistically down the stairs and out into the street.

They all crossed the Old Park together. Home to dinner was practical fact. Dr. North had his room and office in West Yarrow Street, at the corner of Clover. So his way lay along with theirs. The girls had forgotten their braid and buttons.

"What is 'vision,' Dr. North?" asked Estabel suddenly.

"Physically or metaphysically?" returned the doctor.

"What is the difference?"

"Are we to talk altogether in interrogations?" The doctor laughed.

"Interrogations expect answers."

"And your questions have the initiative. Well — so far as I understand, physics deal with matter and the energies of matter; metaphysics with something beyond, or behind."

"Thank you. That settles it. I mean both."

"Both together?"

"I don't see how they can be separate. One means how, and the other why — of the same thing."

"What have you been studying?"

"Nothing new — out of books. But I have been *seeing* things; and I want to know what you think 'vision' means."

"I should say it means first the thing pictured to the eye; and then the thing as pictured by the eye to the brain; the impression made upon the sensorium."

"Is n't the sensorium a thing, too?"

"Matter, yes; a constitution of matter closely connected with the immaterial; with what we call 'mind.' There we have to stop."

"Why?"

"Because we cannot investigate the immaterial."

"We only know it is there?"

"We only know that we come to where we know nothing."

"Or everything," said Estabel with grave simplicity.

"'Babes and sucklings!'" ejaculated Dr. North.

"Perhaps you'll tell me what, in your seeing of things, you have got at?"

"Only this," said Estabel ingenuously. "The world is so alive. And things mean so much. They make us feel and think. And feeling and thinking are what

living is for. So the making and the meaning must be the very inside feeling and thinking of it all. Isn't it?"

God, and his word. Dr. North had never had it presented to him quite so before.

It was a child's perception, a child's unstudied expression; but it went as deep as the mystic proem to the gospel of St. John.

Dr. North would not contradict it. His materialism was greatly in his own way, but he would not puzzle this fresh nature with it — not just now, at any rate.

"That opens a long research and argument," he said.

"You have n't got into the complications yet. I think you are a great deal better off just where you are."

"I am just as *happy* as I can be!" said Estabel, with a spring in her voice. "I've been among the flowers — and the rainbows!"

Was that pure childish? Dr. North wondered. How much would she probably have to outgrow? And how long would it take her?

Then he remembered Mrs. Trubin and her rainbows, which he perceived were most likely just what Estabel had meant. And Mrs. Trubin was seventy-two years old.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ASPHODEL AND WATER LILIES.

"MAY I bring my dearest friend in Tophthorpe to stay with me in Stillwick?"

That was the question Estabel put at the end of her letter to Aunt Esther, just when the final arrangements were making for her summer visit.

And Miss Charlock wrote back, at the end of hers: "What does your other aunt say? You know I don't meddle with any of your Tophthorpe affairs."

"I know it, auntie," Estabel rejoined. "This is n't Tophthorpe at all, though it's *in* Tophthorpe. It's a separate thing. Aunt Vera allowed it on condition of its being separate. Lilian has nothing to do with Mount Street or Mr. Satterwood's or Scalchi's. She's just as separate as she can be. You *could n't* mix her up with them. Stillwick is the only thing that is good enough for her."

"Chooty-choo!" ejaculated Miss Charlock when she read that. "Seems to me valuations have risen in Stillwick, and taxes are going to be according." But her eyes shone, and she laughed, and her last note accepted the tax.

Lilian Hawtree was to come. Aunt Esther was to be in Tophthorpe on a certain Wednesday, and both girls were to go home with her. Estabel's portmanteau and a handsome, capacious traveling-bag with which Mrs. Clymer had provided her would carry all she would need in Stillwick. Her trunk, full of newer and finer things, would go to Pequant with Aunt Vera's to await her coming there in August.

Aunt Vera had offered to send her sister-in-law-in-law and Estabel back to Stillwick in her own carriage; but when it appeared that there was to be this third passenger she accepted Miss Charlock's announced intention of arranging the little journey in her own way, not realizing exactly what that way would be.

Miss Charlock arrived, driven by Mr. Simon Peter Babson, in that gentleman's one-horse, two-seated, canvas-covered wagon, the canvases rolled up at the sides and back, as befitted the summer weather; and this primitive equipage drew up beside the marble carriage block in front of 84, where the great grays and the barouche were wont to stamp and glitter in the eyes of the vicinage.

Archibald carried out the bag and portmanteau. Mrs. Clymer kissed Estabel somewhat hastily in the doorway, and then retreated to hold herself on edge, as it were, till Mr. Babson's "Gaw-wan!" sounded peremptorily to his "ewe-necked bay," giving time between the deliberate syllables for equine realization and compliance; and the slightly rickety wheels, that slanted leisurely to right and left from the irksome perpendicular, rattled with twist and jerk out of the paved gutter. Aunt Vera comforted herself with the recollection that her nearest neighbors were already out of town, and that up and down the street blinds and shutters were largely sported against the heat.

Nobody in Mr. Babson's wagon minded the heat much that afternoon. Aunt Esther was reticently very happy; so much so that she was positively glum and impassible in outward bearing, and left the talk mostly to the two young girls and Simon Peter Babson, who entertained them on the way with news and descriptions, — the one for Estabel, coming back to old haunts and familiar associations, the other for her friend, strange as yet to all the charm and consequence of Stillwick, for which he held himself at present responsibly representative.

As to these two, the summer breeze, sweeping through under the wagon roof, and the outspread of the beautiful world into which they were escaping, neutralized all oppression of the July day, and spared them all impatience or even consciousness of the slow, clattering pace at which they were drawn along by the lean old nag, who seemed, stretching forward his scraggy neck as into indefinite distance, to strive to get there sooner with his head than with his heels, and needed constantly to be supplied with dynamic force by Simon Peter's mechanically reiterated "Ge-ed — up!" and "Gaw-wan!"

They had called in Shawme Street for Lilian; it was directly on their way. Her modest box had been slipped in under the seat with Estabel's portmanteau. Lilian herself was placed behind as guest with Miss Charlock, while Estabel took the front beside Mr. Babson. They waved and kissed good-by to the Gladmother, standing half hidden among her ferns at her side window that overlooked the gate and dooryard. In a few minutes more they were on the long bridge; and then they left the Shawme behind and struck off through the edges of Roystonport and Lexbridge, and by and by into Marsden Marches.

With the first plunge into the Great Marsden Woods, through which the high road lay, with the first smell of the azalea blooms floating out from the dark, distant swamps, began the ecstasy of the new life.

"Did n't I tell you, Lilian?" cried Estabel triumphantly.

"No — you did n't. You *could* n't. It had to tell itself."

Simon Peter understood, in his homely way. "Them pinks *is* ojerous," he said complacently. "Thiz a place out here, a ways, where we can git some."

"They 'll wilt," said Miss Charlock.

"No, they won't. I won't let 'em. I've kerried 'em home afore now. You won't mind a little wet

moss under foot, jest between us, will ye, Estabel? You'll only hev ter keep them small trotters o' yourn a leetle to one side."

Estabel laughed. "I'd rather sit on my feet all the way than not have them," she said.

So presently a great armful of the wild, beautiful things, in the straggly protection of their own shrubby branches, was heaped between the forward occupants of the vehicle and the low dasher, and bearing away with them the fragrant atmosphere of the hidden fens, the dim, untrodden places out of which a pure blessedness distilled itself so widely.

"They are own cousins to the rhododendrons," said Estabel.

"But oh, how white they are, and how sweet!" said Lilian.

"It's a dreadful sweet time o' year," said Mr. Babson. "The lilies is all aout in the gyardins, Estabel; and the elderblows is comin' on, down by the brook; and the pond lilies — why, Henslee Pools an' the East Bend is jest shinin' with 'em. It's a mighty pooty season to come to Stillwick."

Lilian leaned over and rested her lips with a quick, soft touch on Estabel's shoulder.

"I *never* had anything like it before," she said, "except in breaths and dreams. Everything is coming true. I suppose Gladmother would say everything true is coming out. It has been there all the time. That's the wonder of it. I'm *so* glad!"

Miss Esther Charlock watched the young girl, listening to her words as to something like a bird warble or a water ripple. It was all in keeping with the "sweet time o' the year." She had expected nothing like this out of Tophthorpe. The self-repression in her face relaxed into a pleased reception.

"Victory Speerin' is goin' to be merried," Simon Peter suddenly informed Estabel. Marsden and Still-

wick were not all swamps and woods and meadows, sweet as the things that grow in these might be. There was life and civilization and human event also. "You remember Victory? Well, they're baound to make a great time of it. She's goin' to live in Peaceport. He keeps a store there. They do say her settin'-aout beats all. Her mother's cousin got the things daoun to Noo Yawk. Tophthorpe warn't smart enough. Them Speerins hev ben slavin', an' sparin', an' savin', ever sence she was born; an' naow it's all lunched aout." Simon Peter's Yankeeisms grew more pronounced as his meanings became more emphatic. "She's got a showy kind of a feller; had some money left him, so they tell, and helps run a smart concern. Wedd'n's to be in church, an' a collection afterwards. Things to eat, to home, I mean. Hired waiters from Peaceport. Somehow 'nuther, them Speerins *hez* got hold of haow ter dew things — 's fur forth 's ter last 'em over this job, anyhaow. — Oh, say! Didger aunt tell ye we're goin' to hev a niew minister? Thiz considerderble stir 'baout that, tew."

"Oh, don't!" said Estabel. "All that spoils the swamp pinks and the pond lilies so!"

Aunt Esther felt suddenly abashed in her secret thought of amused complacency that things could be done in one place as well as in another; and that matters of distinctive consequence in Tophthorpe and with the Clymers could be reduced to their essential absurdity in Stillwick and by the Speerings.

"After all, it's folks — not things nor ways nor places," she said oracularly; adding without very apparent relevance or connection, "and there's a water-level everywhere, which accounts for swamps and ditches as well as for Lake Champlain or the Mediterranean." And then she asked Lilian friendly questions, and told Estabel of Henslee Place and Cousin Lucy, and managed to elbow Simon Peter out of the conversation.

Two hours later Lilian Hawtree was at home in Stillwick, settled joyously in the opposite little dormer room to Estabel, under the like elm shadow, through which the orioles flitted and sang their tender twilight songs. The girls spoke softly across to each other, or made their own quiet flittings back and forth, sharing and exchanging their delights. The only difference between their lodgments was that one side window was to the east, the other to the west. Lilian would have the early shining of the day, Estabel the afternoon and evening radiance. Was this augury? Not altogether; each had outlook also toward the wide, warm south, and the fulfilling noontide.

In a certain way, Estabel had outgrown the kitchen garden romance. Beanvines and cornstalks could not quite so sufficiently represent her widening world — her deepening life, rather, that was more fully reaching into and realizing itself and its world-wide, absolute relation. There were beginnings in her of something larger than even any possible acted story; that certainly could not be put on in fanciful pretense; that would never be satisfied with any simulance. There is an age, differing greatly with individuals, when girls put away their dolls, or think they do, and must have actual, living interests. The replacement may be only in form; many a woman plays baby house to the end of her days. Estabel's dolls had not been of the baby house sort; they had been but representations, but they had represented something of interior reality.

The morning after they had come to Stillwick she led Lilian down to the brook; on into the sweet gloom of the pines, lightened by the sun filtering through clumps of delicate-leaved, white-stemmed birches. It was a fairy wood; Lilian sighed and smiled with soft delight.

"It reaches all the way to Henslee Place and back over the brook to the Red Ledges," Estabel told her as they sat down upon a lichen-cushioned rock under a

close covert, whence they could just catch the dancing sparkle of the little leaping stream that scampered over a bed of stones round an out-cropping knoll that elbowed it into the open.

From the path they had left, a whistle sounded; evidently it appeared in answer to Estabel's voice, overheard, though the speaker could not have been overseen.

"All the way to Henslee Place is no such immense distance, Estabel. I'm here, you see, hunting you out already. I wanted one of the old days. I did not know you had other company," Harry Henslee added, as his quick, strong step crackled through the short brush, and he came round and stood before them, raising his hat with a more formal greeting.

"Can't do it — as to the days. Have to keep making new ones all the time. Mr. Harry Henslee, let me introduce you to my friend, Miss Lilian Hawtree."

Lilian stood up, on the lower slope of the rock, her hat in her hand, the light air stirring her bright locks, the sunshine sifting down upon them and powdering them with gold. The color of a wild rose was in her cheeks; the dew of the morning was in her pool-brown eyes; a real wild rose, just gathered, was at her throat, its stem slipped through the golden circlet that she almost always wore. Her straight, slim figure in its pretty dimity gown, narrow ruffled at throat and wrist and hem, and belted in at the waist with a dark green ribbon like that which was knotted about the hat she held, and dropped its flutter of cool color against the white folds of her skirt, made the daintiest of pictures in its simple grace, and fitted singularly to its wild-wood setting.

After a second's pause Harry Henslee spoke. He very nearly forgot to make ordinary response. The introduction was more a revelation than a formality.

"I did n't mean to interrupt," he said. "I ought to beg your pardon, Miss Hawtree."

Estabel had never heard just that tone of deference in Harry's speech before.

"For being an older friend of Estabel's than I am?" asked Lilian, with a bright, frank smile. "If any one is in the way, I think it must be I."

"Then I may stay?"

"Of course, Harry. Help us to make the new day. Every day now is bran-spick-and-span new to me — just as if I never had had Stillwick before. I never did, with Lilian in it."

"I guess you know how good Estabel is, Mr. Henslee," said Lilian. Her smile bewildered the young fellow yet more. Estabel laughed out.

"I don't believe you can impose me upon Harry," she said. "He knows my iniquities of old. And yet he does n't know me with Lilian in my life, any more than I did Stillwick. I am finding myself out, delightfully; perhaps he will."

Harry Henslee glanced from one to the other. Certainly a new tone, a new poise, showed Estabel to him as he had not hitherto seen her. She spoke, moved, as in her own right. Alone, in the old days, she had been an unformed personality, an uncertain quantity. Now she seemed to have found supplement and relation. It was quite another girl who stood here, free and happy, unscorned and unscorning, companioned to her heart's satisfying, from her who had, as he thought, made little of herself in Tophthorpe, and who before, in Stillwick, had not really begun to be. It was a new creature in a new day. It was as wonderful a disclosure as that of the lovely cause that was seemingly working the wonder.

They wandered through the woods together by a way Estabel did not remember; it took them farther than her ordinary range, and brought them by and by to where they struck the brook again, which had thrown a long loop around a sunny meadow. They crossed its

deepened water where it narrowed in the cleft of a great boulder, whose sloping halves leaned their crests toward each other from either side, so nearly closing that a long, firm step midway, between a climb and a descent, might accomplish the passage. Hence they followed the shining guidance of the stream between woodside and open; the wide level of the latter stretching away at their left, sheeted like snow with the frail white blossoms of the sagittaria. Lilian's exclamation of delight was passionate.

"Is it *asphodel*?" she cried. "I never — *never* — saw anything like that before!"

"It is arrowhead," said Harry. "I don't know what *asphodel* is like."

"Nor I," said Lilian, "except that it grows in fields of heaven. I said '*asphodel*' by instinct; it is so exquisite and pure."

"*Asphodel*," repeated Harry after her. "It is a pretty name. It ought to be among girls' names."

That was the way he said it. To himself, he thought suddenly, "Why did n't they call *her* *Asphodel*?"

"It rhymes to Estabel," remarked the young lady of that name demurely.

"Yes — *rhymes*," said Harry. "A rhyme is a kind of echo."

"I'm glad even to echo to anything 'so exquisite and pure,'" returned the girl with a yet aggravated demureness.

Was it a mischievous thought-reading or had the same intuitive suggestion come to both?

Harry reddened a little. Estabel reverted easily to matter of fact. "We won't pick them," she said; "they wilt so quickly."

"Pick them!" exclaimed Lilian. "It would be a sin. I would n't touch their pretty lives for anything."

"But we are going to pick lilies," said Harry Henslee, wondering perhaps what reconciliation she would

make. There was something in this Lilian Hawtree that he would like to understand. Usually he was content to take people upon the surface, — to like or dislike — to judge or misjudge — without much labor of comprehension. It was this that Estabel had found hard, unfair, in him.

"Oh, that is different," was Lilian's response. "It is easy to make them happy. Their world is only water. They will be just as alive, and live just as long, if you float them in a basin, as they would do in a pond. But you can't put back a field or wood flower into its element. It will miss its mothering and its place."

"You are wearing a wild rose, Miss Hawtree?" He said it interrogatively, as if she could give a reason, not to confuse her. He recognized in her already a simplicity that would not be confused, that there was no risk of confounding.

"Yes. Estabel gave it to me; so I put it on to keep it safe, and because it was so sweet. I believe I know what I had better do with it."

She drew the flower from its fastening, held it gently to her face and breathed its breath; then she stooped down and dropped it softly upon the bosom of the brook. It floated off, smiling up in pink and golden freshness as it drifted.

"It will last longer so, and it will be sweet to the end," she said.

They walked till they came to where the brook fell down a sudden rocky incline, and broadened to the filling of a wide hollow like a little lake; this was one of the Upper Pools. It was shining with water lilies, as Simon Peter Babson had described.

Harry got great bunches of them, and of their pink-streaked, olive buds. The girls were presently carrying over their arms the drooping sheaves whose gathered stems were more than their hands could clasp.

"We will make a lily pond in a big tub on the back platform, under the maples," said Estabel.

"And sit there while the lilies last," added Lilian.

"Or until Monday, when Mrs. Bleacher will want her tubs and washing-place," Estabel amended.

"Don't be so horribly prosaic," remonstrated Harry Henslee.

Estabel opened her eyes wide at him. "As since when?" she demanded. "And since when has my poetry left off being 'rubbish'?" And Harry laughed.

"Matter out of place is rubbish, whether prose or poetry," he retorted.

"Lilian," said Estabel gravely, "I have always been matter out of place, one way or another, ever since I was born."

Harry was not sure whether she were really hurt or not. He moved nearer to her side, and walked on with her. "You don't mind?" he said.

"Being out of place? No; I'm used to it. I simply intend some time to make my own place."

She lifted up her head with anything but a snubbed comportment, and laughed frankly.

"I think there's not the slightest doubt you will," Harry answered her, making admiring *amende*. Her pluck was what the boy involuntarily gave homage to. But a girl — a woman — does not care to win by pluck.

They had walked slowly back to the boulder rocks, and crossed them to the wood shadow. Here they rested, looking back upon the brook and over into the white-blossomed meadow. Lilian arranged her namesake flowers. She twisted two long stems around her golden brooch; two pink-white, sunny-hearted, half open buds dropped their graceful heads against her bosom. In her lap lay the loose coil, among which her fingers played lovingly, turning upward the sweet faces that looked and breathed their incomparable freshness into her own, as it leaned over them.

"They suit you," Harry Henslee said.

Lilian took the word of compliment, if it were such, as simply as a child.

"Indeed, they do," she answered. "They look so happy and content. The poor rose would have been all dead by now. I'm glad it floated off alive." And then her eyes, lifted from her lilies, went with the reminder straight past the boy's admiring face, and rested on the delightful white expanse of the great field of growing flowers beyond.

"It's such a comfort," she said presently, "to think that all this is only a little of it, after all."

"Why! Why?" exclaimed and interrogated Estabel.

"Because it does not make us discontented to go back to a little less. Because we see that a little gives us the feeling of all the rest, that perhaps we never can see; and *ever* so little is enough for that."

Neither of the others answered. There is never much to answer when a clear truth has been simply spoken.

"I should just like to *see* her see the rest," said Harry Henslee to himself.

It was almost Aunt Esther's early dinner time. Estabel reminded them of that, and they all retraced the woodland path together to the foot of the little home orchard. There Harry said good-by, declining invitation to come in and have luncheon with them. Somehow, though he did not say so, common eating and drinking indoors would not just yet suit him after such a morning.

He walked home through the long wood way again, feeling, rather than thinking, how the best of the old days had been in this, and something more. He did not try to discover what had been the new spell which had made everything so exceedingly delightful. He was at an age when the boy begins to feel the strong

flush of his manhood, but when the man asks the boy no questions. He was just the younger side of twenty.

He only thought that Estabel Charlock was nicer than ever; that Topthorpe had done something for her after all; and that the very nicest of her had discovered and taken to herself in Topthorpe this new friendship. And still he was rather more than ever of the opinion that to Topthorpe in general she never would quite fit herself.

He hardly cared to learn just where she had found Lilian. Not at Scalchi's, nor anywhere among the young elite whom he knew well. Elite? she was a girl who might fit anywhere that she would care to be. It would be she who would elect, not need to be elected. For the first time he discerned that the elegance he valued *was* election; a choosing by natural affinities the sweetest and the best; and that the cultivated grace and breeding which assumed itself might but assume at second hand. He did not want to know just yet who Lilian Hawtree's father might be, or in what street she lived.

"How did you find Estabel?" Aunt Lucy asked of him at dinner.

"In the woods."

"Of course," answered the lady, smiling. "That was the likely where. But *how* — herself?"

"Oh, very much herself. More and better. Revised and improved."

"Illustrated?"

"If you mean in the way of picture prettiness, I should say no; not fully. And yet" —

"Estabel will never be pretty. She will be beyond that, if anything."

"I guess that was what I meant to say. Estabel is very possible, but she does n't quite come to pass."

"What may come to pass with her takes time."

"That's a pity, isn't it? A girl's time isn't so very long."

"A woman's is — or any human being's. But what about her friend? What is she like?"

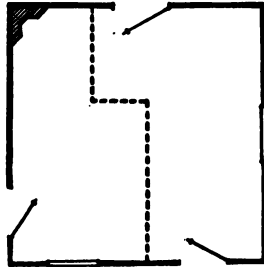
"Miss Hawtree? Well, it strikes me that she is a new kind of a girl altogether."

That was frank, but ambiguous. Miss Henslee did not know exactly what to make of it. But she asked no further questions.

SQUARE AND ROUND.

They were sitting in the shop. It was a rainy day. The two girls were to have gone to Henslee Place, but the weather had rendered that out of the question.

Lilian sat by Miss Charlock's side in the cosy, carpeted square space behind the counters, which zigzagged through the length of the apartment in this fashion:



At the front the outer door gave passage; at the side another communicated with the dwelling across the little hall. In the farther corner a small open fireplace,

with a basket grate, furnished cheer and warmth in winter. Now it was filled with boughs, green flags, and cat-o'-nine tails. A round table for work stood in the middle of the home square, as Estabel had christened it; and shelves from floor to ceiling — a part of them for boxes and folded goods, and a part for the books of the little circulating library — occupied every available wall space in both sections. The jog in the counter was formed by the flap-leaf, for passage; set between retaining boards at the ends of the counters proper, to keep it clear from encroachment. Aunt Esther was insistently methodical.

It was a very compact, well-contrived little duplex establishment, very much on the Boffin principle. The home part was exclusive; very few were invited to come therein. The divisions of business and privacy were as pronounced as those of Wall Street and Fifth Avenue. Behind that counter-swing Miss Charlock was of the best position in Stillwick. In the very face of her trade her dignity was patent.

"I wish you would let me trim a bonnet."

"Do you think you could? — Estabel, I wish you would come in out of the shop and sit down."

"I will if Lilian is going to trim a bonnet. I'd like to watch her, and to see you watch."

"You idle child!"

"It would n't be idleness. It would be a most improving study in evolution and moral effect."

"Chooty-choo!"

"That means, Lilian, being interpreted, Choose — your choose! All frippery is open to you. Whose bonnet is it to be? I'll give you the personality you are to adapt to. Is it Mrs. Listenhard's, auntie, or Miss Chatterly Glib's? One ought to be well set off at the ears and wide in the flare, and the other very easy in the strings and bobby as to the topknot. One ought to express 'I want to know,' and the other 'I can tell you all about it, for I was knowin' to the whole.'"

"Estabel! If you let yourself mimic, and twist people's names, you'll do it to their faces some time, before you think."

"They wouldn't see themselves if you held up a looking-glass. And I'm sure it is n't a far fetch from 'Lisnard' to my proper pronunciation of *that*; and as for Charity Gibb, if she is n't Chatterly Glib, she is n't anything."

Miss Charlock turned to Lilian. "It shall not be for anybody in particular. You shall do it as you like, and we'll see who'll choose it."

"I don't believe a single person in Stillwick will. It will be right over all their heads, like that lecture at the Lyceum last week," persisted Estabel.

"That would be an impossible success," said Lilian, laughing. "Oh, that pretty new straw! You are n't going to risk that with me?"

"When I trust anybody, I trust them *with* something. Pick out your ribbon. Do you want flowers?"

"Are there any real ones? I mean copies of real flowers. If I had time and the things, I would make some."

"Make some!"

"Yes; I've learned. It's pretty work. There was a Madame Saurelle who came to Tophthorpe to try and make a business of it. She went to New York after a little while. But she boarded with a friend of Glad-mother's in Clover Street, and we knew her very well. She taught me. She never made what we call 'French flowers'—those fine little any-sorts of things. She said she *despised* artificielles, and that we never got the real French art here. She made real roses, that you wanted to smell; and heliotropes and pansies and poppies, and oh! such geraniums—pelargoniums, they call them now—with their beautiful curly, downy, or shiny-green leaves! Her 'bouquets de corsage' were wonderful. One could n't have worn them out of doors in

summer for fear of the bees. But her things had to be so very dear that there were not people enough to buy them. It seems to me she might have made them cheaper, only her life had to be so dear. She had a sick daughter, and a wretched son somewhere — and I don't know but a husband — who always had to have money to run away with somewhere else. So her time was very expensive. Anybody who had a home and a little bit of some independent work or money might make it help out beautifully. Gladmother thought it was good for me to know, and I am sure it was very pleasant."

All through the recital of this little episode Lilian's busy fingers had been turning over with delicate touches the contents of ribbon and flower boxes which Miss Charlock took down from the shelves and placed before her.

"Oh, what a lovely violet!" she exclaimed, unrolling an end of satin-striped "lutestring." "And here is some creamy white, striped just like it. Have you any black trimming lace?"

"*Plen-ty o' that!*" Miss Charlock answered, with an inimitable intonation of her own which she was wont to use to indicate an abounding certainty. And down came another box, whose plenty consisted of three or four folds, of as many yards each, of the article desired. Probably it was one that had long waited a demand, and as dead value magnified itself to Miss Charlock's business estimate.

Lilian found a piece of a light leaf pattern whose outline formed its graceful edge.

"Why, Miss Charlock! What exquisite choice you have!" she exclaimed, as she drew it forth in its length and laid it lightly upon the rippling violet ribbon.

"Well, I know what I think's handsome — in lace or anything else," returned the lady. "But Stillwick don't always agree with me. I've had that purple

ribbon four or five years. They call it a half mournin' color here; and there ain't many half mourners. They can't have so many changes. They get over it all at once, when they begin. And the young girls all want pink and blue and scarlet and figured — anything but yuller. Yuller's darkies' color, they say; only they call it by the other word for darky."

"Why, yellow is beautiful! It is the sunshine color. You don't want a glare of it, but just a lighting up, or a single bright little flash. I should just like to show you, some time. *Now* my heart is fixed on this violet and the lace. Only there isn't a flower here that will quite do. I *wish* I had some purple asters!"

"Well, there ain't almost anything that isn't laid by in an old milliner's shop. I bought some things at a selling out, the only solitary time I ever was in New York, and there they've been. Folks called 'em stiff; the fashion's been so long for things trailly and droopy, and long-endy, hangin' off on one side; and I never could seem to work it in so 's 't they'd go."

Miss Charlock climbed to the top of her library steps, which she wheeled in through the counter gap, and placed before the remotest range of shelves, from the topmost of which she presently reached down a large flat box with a very dusty cover.

"Here, Estabel! Take this, and carry it steady and brush it off out of the *back* window, where the rain won't drive in."

Dusted and opened, it revealed to Lilian's delighted eyes the very "real things" she had sighed for. "Why, these might be Madame Saurelle's own," she said. There were asters of dark and pale purples, and of pure white; there were chrysanthemums, white, brown, golden; there were grasses and clover-heads, and gay columbines. None of them could be made droopy or trailly; they stood up bright and strong, except for the bending of the grass-tops and the delicately nodding spurred corollas of the *Aquilegia*.

An empty box upon a stool made a low work tray; into it went the lace and the ribbon and the aster flowers, white lining silk, muslin "foundation." Lilian began at once to fit brim facing and cut "bias" for the frill.

She had got her lap full and was literally immersed in her pretty occupation, when the door from the hallway opened and Harry Henslee, looking down from his own height and that of the two inward steps, stood upon the threshold.

"May I come?" he asked. "I sha 'n't spatter anything. I've left my oilskin in the woodhouse. I could n't let the day be quite washed out of the week, and I've a message besides from Aunt Lucy. You're to come to-morrow, weather or no. The woods will be wet in the morning, even if it clears, but I'm to bring the carriage. There'll be the chance of the walk back by the little moon and the twilight. — What are you all up to?" looking solely at Lilian with the drift of color and light stuff about her.

"Making a bonnet."

"Seeing it made."

"I can help with the party of the second part."

"More likely to hinder." But Aunt Esther, as she spoke, pulled a camp stool beside her from under the counter, with contradictory permission.

"Lilian is never hindered," said Estabel.

"Because there are n't any hindrances," said Lilian.

"What interrupts only comes into a place of its own."

"That's nice doctrine. I guess your world's round, Miss Hawtree."

"Is n't everybody's?"

"No. Or there are lots of people that don't suit themselves to a round world or round places. They're square pegs, that won't fit anywhere. So they're always trying to square circles, which is exactly what can't be done."

"If there are square pegs, there must be square places somewhere," said Estabel. "Every angle fits its own corner, if you can only find out where you go in the puzzle. I like tangrams, when they work straight. Only I don't like to be the odd piece."

"Of course you do; and of course you don't; and usually they won't; and very often — you are."

"Categorical," said Estabel. "And kindly."

"Of course. Meant so. Acknowledging your importance. When the odd piece is once set right, with its angles accommodated, it's awfully right. Otherwise, it's awfully set and persistently in the way. For myself, being of no particular importance, I'd rather slide round comfortably. It's the plan of the universe. What should we do with square worlds and square orbits? They simply could n't be."

"What nonsense! As if square and round had n't their proper relations! With a radius of half the diameter, you can inscribe a circle in any square; and with half the diagonal, you can describe a circle round it. And 'square' is only another word for fair and true."

"Exactly so; and 'all round' means pretty much the same thing; and the square being just as potential to the round, I'd rather describe the circle than turn any severe angles. Give me a round earth and a gay little ecliptic. I approve of things as they are."

"The Golden City 'lieth foursquare,'" said Lilian quietly.

"That we are to come to. Yes, perhaps. I have no doubt there is a geometry that will make it all right. In the meantime there does seem to be a little practical — and Biblical — mixing up. You can't understand which is the ruling principle or type. There's the round earth, that cannot be moved; and there are the four corners of the earth, and the four quarters, and the four winds, and the four seasons; and the four creatures with the four wings and four sides and four faces;

and the four very queer wheels that 'went upon their four sides, and turned not as they went;' and yet they had 'dreadful high rings,' " —

"Harry!"

"It's all there. I'm in earnest. But I suppose nobody pretends to know what it all means. And there's a lot more somewhere else, about Solomon's temple, and the round molten sea, and the round lavers, and the square bases, and the twelve oxen that held up the molten sea, and looked three to the north, and three to the west, and three to the south, and three to the east" —

"You're only proving what I said, that the square and the round are related and not opposed," said Estabel concisely. "And you're making nonsensical gibberish out of it."

"Chooty-choo!" interjected Miss Charlock. "You don't either of you know what you're talking about, and you'll make Lilian spoil her bonnet."

"How did we get into all these morals and mathematics? Who began it?" demanded Estabel.

"The kettle began it. You boiled up, and said that Miss Hawtree could n't be hindered."

"And Lilian said that hindrances didn't hinder. And then you proceeded to prove personally that they did."

"I said that interruptions — I mean things that come along naturally, in the day's work — were not hindrances, because they were part of the plan, and had their right of way. And besides, Mr. Henslee lost his argument, for I was not even interrupted."

She held up on one hand in evidence the pretty straw, in whose close little brim she had already set a line of white silk facing, glistening softly through an edging of narrow black lace. "Now I have the cape to make."

"There's got to be a 'kick' to that," interposed Aunt Esther.

"The last thing I should think of applying to a bonnet," said Harry.

"Nobody asked you to. Lilian knows what I mean. It's the milliner's knack. And it isn't easy to get. If you don't hit it, there won't be any air at all to the whole thing."

"I'm fair at football," remarked Harry in a subdued manner.

"Miss Charlock means the line of expression. That has to be kept to in the whole making. See here — how this brim slants slightly backward; and how the cut-off of the crown follows the same slope; now the frill must n't stick up nor hang down, but fall off accordingly; not stiffly, but with a light sweep of its own. And then the flowers and the ribbon must be set on to harmonize. If I were to put a bow, or fasten ends, at right angles to the line of expression, it would be an ugliness. Just as if you were to paint a picture with a breeze in it, and make one thing blow one way and another another."

"I told you so. Right angles are disastrous, in manners, morals, and millinery. There's a law of harmony in your work, Miss Hawtree."

"As there is in everything — right angles and all. You would n't build a house as you would trim a bonnet," answered Lilian, smiling.

Her quick, dexterous fingers were rapidly putting together the white silk plaiting, over which lay the delicate tracery of the leaf-patterned lace; with a few strong, skillfully placed stitches which drew it close in exactly the proper curves, she fastened it to the back of the bonnet, setting it off with the mysterious "kick" that even Harry could recognize now that it was illustrated.

Lilian held it up again. "Is n't it light, and breezy, and all of a mind and motion?" she asked.

"You're making poetry of it," said Estabel.

"Wait till the asters bloom out on it, and I carry these lovely ribbons along the line of expression. Don't look at me while I do it. I don't mind, only I'd like you to see it done, instead of doing."

But Harry Henslee took the "don't mind" as license for not minding, and watched the pretty process undisguisedly, until a little constellation of the asters arose with white and purple gleam out of a cloud-like lace shadow at precisely the right, gracefully effective point above the left horizon brim, and violet and white ribbons, drawn lightly back from the cluster around the low, broad crown, were knotted together in the hollow of the neck frill, escaping thence in their own latitude to complete the "breezy line of expression."

"I told you it was going to be a poem!" exclaimed Estabel, as Lilian affixed the strings to their corners — a violet and a white one — and tied them, in their intermingling tints, in a bewitching chin bow. "Every bit of it is a rhyme and the whole is a reason."

"I like it," Lilian said simply, as she turned it round on her uplifted wrist. "Do you, Miss Charlock?"

"Yes, I do. Still an' all, I tell you it's ahead of time. The fashion has n't caught up with it. It will, of course. One of these days, they'll find out that flowers don't grow upside down, and a lively bird don't always wear its plumes draggling. And then you won't be able to stick things up high and straight enough, nor get them of a tall enough kind. I ain't sixty yet, and I may live to see mulleins and goldenrod and hard-hack and feather dusters runnin' up into the air on women's heads. And maybe I shall get depraved enough to admire 'em. — There — I've said my say, and now I'll confess up candid you've done a thing clear away out of the common, an' I could n't have done it, an' I don't care if it *don't* sell. If ever you was to be a regular milliner the style would follow you, instead

of you the style; and I guess you're made that way in most things."

Harry Henslee thought to himself that Aunt Esther's head was level; nevertheless, looking into Lilian Hawtree's pleased eyes, he wondered just a little at their pleasure. It was not altogether at Miss Charlock's brusque compliment, he knew, but a pure, essential delight.

"You are as happy over these things as you were over the water lilies and the meadow flowers," he said tentatively.

"Maybe not *so* happy, but just as really. Why not? There is n't but one kind of pleasure, is there? Having things right and beautiful in their way, and doing your work and taking your part in everything as rightly and beautifully as you can. That's all the living there is, Gladmother says; and it's all we're made alive for."

"It's time for dinner," Miss Charlock remarked briefly, rising to leave the shop. But Harry Henslee made no move to leave.

"May n't I stay?" he asked Aunt Esther.

Life strikes many an unheeded prophetic little note. A word, a trivial happening, gives hint, like a theme in music, of something that is to be more or less recurrent all the way along.

It was not the last time that Lilian Hawtree would trim a bonnet for Aunt Esther. It was not the last time that these three young persons would meet the questions of their experience together, and find them interwoven.

Nor was it the last time that Estabel Charlock would be reminded of square pegs, and the misjoins of the great Tangram Puzzle.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PANORAMA OF THE PAST.

A MORNING carriage drive through the quiet villages of Stillwick and The Corners brought the young people to Henslee Place, where Aunt Lucy greeted them with her cordial grace, and made them free of the wide, beautiful house, since out-of-door pleasure would not be practicable until the wet of the heavy rain should have exhaled a little longer from the sweet-reeking fields and woods.

Colonel Henslee, although not definitely ill, had grown more infirm with the passing year, and now lived altogether in his own rooms, where his deafness shielded him from any invading sounds; and this seclusion and insured quiet rendered it possible for the young life which Miss Lucy loved and drew around her to have full enjoyment of its liberty in all the rest of the old mansion.

Estabel led Lilian about and showed her all the things that had delighted herself from early childhood; told her bits of household history, explained the pictures, and the associations of quaint old furnishings; especially they lingered, as Estabel had always done, before the beautiful portrait in the hall.

Harry met them there at the foot of the staircase, after a little visit in his grandfather's room.

"Is n't she lovely?" Estabel was asking in a low tone as if in presence of the living original. And Lilian only made a little sighing sound in answer.

"She is my father's mother," said Harry Henslee.

"And she is my father's aunt," Estabel Charlock declared, with a sweet pride that she would never have shown anybody else in her little world.

"How glad you must be!"

And it seemed to the three young things as if the gracious face looked down upon them out of its past with a new, responding smile. Who knows? And who knows if out of past or present? For I believe that a dear picture is now and then informed.

"May we go up into the big Press Chamber?" Harry asked Miss Henslee presently afterward. The idea came so naturally, as we shall see, from this touch with the old and proudly cherished.

"That means 'May we rummage there?' Yes; with discrimination — and due respect," Miss Henslee answered him. She had trusted the boy before, and with all his love of frolic she knew both his reverence and his discretion.

"I say," he called to the two girls as he overtook them in the long upper corridor with the keys, "we'll have a Panorama of the Past in the gallery of the dancing-room. There are old things that came from England, — court gowns, and wigs, and a British naval uniform that belonged to Admiral Henslee, and no end of petticoats and frills and plumes and caps and kerchiefs, to say nothing of made-up character dresses that have been worn at old balls and plays, and in tableaux. The chests and wardrobes are brimful. We'll be everybody that ever was, that we have time to be."

"Where's the audience?"

"Hush! How do we know?" he whispered mysteriously.

"Do you suppose their gowns and wigs and furbelows are all that is left of those fine old wise and splendid folks? Don't you know every old house is full of 'em coming and going, more or less, as they take an interest, and people behave? They were n't the sort to forget

their old places, or not to look after their kin, even though the stupid places and the kin may know them no more."

"I think that is true," said Lilian. "Only I suppose the sort of stories we hear about it are like fables, false outside, but made about something real."

"You believe in ghosts?" Harry turned upon her quickly.

"In spirits, certainly."

"Noises and apparitions?"

"It seems to me those are very feeble things. Spirits are stronger: they are like wind, 'that bloweth where it listeth.' Where their thought is, there they are. And spirits know when spirits come. Perhaps our thought may sometimes find theirs, and call them."

"And that's why they talk about 'fetches.'"

"You are half in fun. But a 'fetch' is a phantom of a living person."

"And if spirits can be fetched, they must be living persons."

"You are very right," she answered gravely.

But they were to have an audience in the flesh, and more actors.

Carriages were heard rolling up the drive. "Oh, dear! visitors!" exclaimed Estabel aggrievedly.

"Maybe it won't matter. Depends on who they are," said Harry. "If we want them, we can have them; if not, Aunt Lucy will take care of them."

They were a party from Peaceport, on their way to the High Quarries, east of Stillwick village, — Crestonfields, Thornils, Paynes, and the young Chumleys; half a dozen young people, with chaperoning elders; friends of the Henslees, who had often filled the house as guests for a day or days; driven round here now for a summer call.

"Luncheon people; that goes without saying," said Harry, watching from the corridor window, and catch-

ing the merry self-announcements. "Aunt Lucy won't be Aunt Lucy if she lets them off, and they knew it when they made their programme. It will be called 'luncheon' by a polite fiction, which can be politely accepted; but it will be a transfigured dinner. We shall sit round easily at the big table and at improvised little ones, and take what is handed to us; and you will wish that dinner was always luncheon, and that luncheon came three times a day. Meanwhile, we shall have our audience. Our ghosts have sent substitutes."

With that he hurried down to do his part of the hospitality.

"I'd rather have had the ghosts," said Estabel.

"They may not stay away," said Lilian. "We can always act to them, like Napoleon's soldiers to the forty centuries."

In a few minutes, with cheerful bustle, a laughing, chatting group gathered in the old dancing-room, whose echoes woke to their voices out of the deserted quiet, like a welcome, indeed, from those other presences of elder generations who had once received here, and through multiplied local consanguinities might easily hail some of these as kin.

"I told you so," whispered Harry, as Lilian remarked to him the resonance. "There's a lot of 'em here. We can draft off the younger ones, as well as not."

"Is your remark ambiguous?" asked Estabel, over-hearing.

"Not at all. Direct, in sequence and significance."

The drafting was done, and after most merry robing in the Press Chamber, the Panorama of the Past began.

At Harry's suggestion Estabel had been empowered as Mistress of the Robes, with Lilian to assist her, that there might be no confusion nor mishandling. Then, from the list of subjects rapidly drawn up by Harry, they had selected and hung carefully, in order of style

and personation, in the press along one whole side of the room, the habits that illustrated, at familiar, salient points, characters, times, and fashions, from the days of the Tudors down to those of the Puritans in Old and New England, and farther on to recent dates, of which they had more local and immediate tradition.

Everything had been so exactly parceled and ticketed in the putting away that the work was not difficult, and in shorter time than could have been thought possible the quaintly charming spectacle began to move through the semi-circular musicians' balcony, which overhung the dancing-room, opening at either end by noiseless double swing doors from the long corridor.

Luncheon was made a little late for both artistic and domestic convenience, so that there remained more than two hours for the performance.

Ned Chumley, in full wig and powder and grand judicial robes, inaugurated the show in a solemn advance as "Edmund Cholmondeley, peer of the realm and Lord High Chancellor of England in the reign of Henry the Eighth. — Nobody is to dispute anything," added Harry Henslee to his announcement made through a narrow chink of the entrance door. "We haven't the exact documents handy, but of course they are somewhere."

Next appeared "Katharine of Aragon and Cardinal Wolsey," pacing the stage with a slow stateliness, as in sad and grave discourse.

Then came "Queen Elizabeth and her Mistress of the Robes and Dame in Waiting, Lady Thornilshaugh; ancestress of our Thornils, — the 'haugh' dropped, probably, when some younger son left the 'hedged land' in England, to come over here and help himself to free forest."

Estabel was Queen Elizabeth, in ruff and farthingale and jewels; and carried herself, Harry told her afterward, "with all the awful Tudor majesty;" perhaps because her companion, one of those same august Thornils,

assumed before the scenes an imperiousness which forced the Queen's to a higher proportional point, and might not improbably, behind them, have ventured some slighting of, or trespass upon the same subordinate authority which it now fell to her, with a certain irony of dignity, to represent.

They swept across the stage with much the mutual air they might have had if the choleric Queen had just privately boxed the ear of her haughty attendant; Harry, as Sir Walter Raleigh, meeting them at the opposite end, and introducing the famous "cloak act." Upon which, Queen Elizabeth trampled the rich garment with such a truly regal emphasis that Sir Walter, feeling responsible, and perhaps not without a quickly perceptive satisfaction in the propriety of limiting his courtesy to royalty itself, withdrew it prudently and bowed himself aside, letting my Lady Thornilshaugh walk off through the suppositious puddle.

Somehow, though he might reprehend Estabel's "square corners," he never really allowed anybody else to be square-cornered with her.

Followed, Amy Robsart and Janet Foster — Elsie Crestonfield and Lilian; the lovely Countess in all her innocent bravery, donned for her Earl's coming; the Puritan girl in demure brown gown, cap and kerchief, prim and sweet.

Leicester and the varlet Varney; Tressilian, in sober russet; the Queen and Amy, in the pleasance of the castle. The Maiden Monarch's reign and "Kenilworth" were rich and tempting for continuous tableaux which everybody recognized.

Then they dropped suddenly down into the story of the Stuarts; and there was "Mistress Cicely Hawtree, North Country maiden, one of the several who hid or helped off 'bonny Prince Charlie' in his many hairbreadth 'scapes;" grasping his hand and hurrying him eagerly along as to some secret nook of refuge, while he

hung back and recklessly delayed, to drop on one knee and gallantly kiss the fair round wrist.

There was "Admiral Blake of the Protectorate," in the Admiral Henslee uniform of a half century or more later — but that did not matter. Afterward, the "Duke of Monmouth," in plumed helmet and hauberk of pasteboard with inconsistent ruffles of fine cambric, "and the Fair Maids of Taunton," with their offerings of flowers and Bible.

Gently along the stage glided a graceful, girlish figure in stomacher and hood, declared as "My Lady of Hensleigh — l-e-i-g-h — of Hensleigh Abbey, Warwickshire; whence came down the name — a good way down — into republican conditions, a plainer spelling, and practical, every-day American life. — My Lady of Hensleigh," Harry repeated, with an involuntary pleased dwelling on the name, at which he caught himself and blushed hotly in the crack of the door, very safely out of observation.

Lilian did not blush, nor think of need; her sweet, large eyes, all unconstrained by any consciousness save of the English lady of high degree and long ago, looked out from their wimpled shelter and met the flashlight of sudden curiosity lifted in those keener eyes below as innocently and unwittingly as a child.

The Peaceport matrons followed her lovely movement from her pause before them till she disappeared; then there was a significant slight rustle, and without other perceptible expression a telepathic query ran around, which responded to itself as instantly, while the alert but well-controlled observers settled back into their seats. "Seventeen — perhaps — and not twenty. Absurd, of course. But who is she?" That question reserved itself.

Pictures of Puritan New England succeeded: Miles Standish and his wife, Rose; Priscilla Mullins and John Alden; Governor Bradford and his gracious dame; then, with historic and representative rapidity, Pres-

cott at Bunker Hill; Thomas Jefferson, with scroll and pen; Washington at Valley Forge; Washington receiving the surrender of Lord Cornwallis; — in all these the same performers and much of the same costuming having to do repeated but well-managed duty.

Last of everything, the lovely "Mistress Dolly Payne Todd, and her 'great, little Madison,' at their first interview;" the eminent James in long coat, knee-breeches and buckles, and exquisite laced ruffles — such as were cut up afterwards for tokens by rapacious wedding guests — coming in first at one door, and she presently from the other end, to receive him with shy stateliness in her "mulberry satin, silk tulle kerchief, and dainty little cap."

This, enacted *con amore*, and with really charming grace, by the two Paynes, lineal descendants of the old Virginia family and the Scotch earl, was received with double interest and great applause, and left the company in happiest appreciative mood. The whole was praised in voluble recapitulation, almost to excess, for impromptu cleverness and brilliant execution.

One more picture had been proposed, by the very dame in waiting who had figured with Queen Elizabeth, who caught a glimpse of a lovely dress of comparatively recent date lying in a large box which Estabel uncovered, to replace therein some plumes and mantles.

"Oh, let us have that!" the girl cried eagerly, laying a rash hand upon the pale-green silken folds, over which some soft paper wrapping was pinned that but half concealed a garniture of rich laces and a corsage knot of violet flowers.

Estabel Charlock, with a regardless movement, brushed away the intrusive fingers, as she proceeded with her work.

Lilian Hawtree drew Miss Thornil gently back. "Hush, please!" she whispered. "I think that is the gown in the beautiful picture downstairs."

The young lady moved off, very much with the air of a high superior with whom a subaltern has dared to expostulate.

Harry Henslee's quick eyes and ears seldom missed anything. They were alive to all to-day, and he caught the little colloquy and movement. "Thank you for that," he said with warmth, coming quietly beside Lilian as she helped Estabel smooth down the last articles into the chest; and he closed the lid and turned the key.

During the descent to luncheon that reserved inquiry came. Who was the pretty Lady of Hensleigh and the Rose of the Mayflower? "Such a charming little person. Oh, Hawtree? Yes, they called her that, in her other part. — *Topthorpe*? Are you sure? I don't think I know the name." The interest dropped away through the last sentences to an entire indifference, and the speaker adverted with a marked carelessness to something else.

Harry was coming down just behind, with Estabel, whose head went up to Tudor height again, and remained so through the luncheon, and until, with thanks and gay good-byes, the carriages had driven away from the hall door.

Harry caught her for a minute a little apart, as the home party went out presently to the peach orchard, Miss Henslee walking forward with Lilian.

"Why are you up on such tremendous stilts?" he asked.

"You know. You heard." And she mimicked. "Charming little person.' People are always 'persons' when they are n't personages. '*Topthorpe*? Are you sure? Miss — Hawtree? I don't think I know the name.' — Had n't she seen the *girl*? As if people had n't any business with names until they had been written in a *Topthorpe* heaven! Oh, that's your nice little round, mean, slippery world, in its gay little orbit!"

Harry laughed, but his face grew grave again. "I would n't be bitter about it," he said. "It's only a way of speaking. It does n't mean much."

Estabel had the last word. "It means all they know how to mean," she answered scornfully.

In the sweet woods, walking home in the twilight, they forgot it all; at least, for the time.

Lilian was serenely gay. "What a wonderful day it has been!" she exclaimed. "Have n't we lived through hundreds of years? And such great, strange lives? And all locked up as if by enchantment in that old Press Chamber! You were quite right about the audience, Mr. Henslee. I felt as if they were all there — out of history, and Shakespeare, and Walter Scott. It was n't *to-day*, at all."

"You played to your own audience, Miss Hawtree. We're used to it. We've had all the old toggeries out before, for many a good frolic; that's the reason we could handle them so fast. But we have never had you in our pictures before. We shall miss you after this."

"Oh, that is kind of you. But somebody else will come. They always do. I'm glad it was I, now, for I don't suppose I shall ever have just such an 'after this.' This must last; and it will. Everything does last."

"No. It's a changing, vanishing world, where there is 'no continuing city.' We're always told so, and it's borne in upon me forcibly. This summer will never come again, and it's almost gone."

"It is n't August yet."

"It will be next week; and then *our* summer will be over. We ought to have had the whole of it."

"We never get the whole of anything," asserted Estabel. "I shall hate August and Pequant."

"I've got all this to carry away," said Lilian. "It is something lovely that I have lived, and that will always

be in my life. I think life is the forever of the happy minutes."

Estabel had marched on, where the path had narrowed. She was in one of her resentful dis gusts.

"I should like you to have everything all the time," said Harry suddenly, as he leaned over Lilian to hold a protruding branch out of her way.

"That's just how I am having it. It *takes* all the time," she answered blithely.

"It seems to me to depend less on time than on condition," Harry replied to that.

She perceived instantly. It was curious how quickly she took a thought, and how unready a personality.

"Well, condition takes time — to arrive. That is a part of it. We're all growing up to our happiness — slowly."

"And to see some people have things is an education."

Perhaps the generality of this last speech instinctively modified the significance of his previous words. Or perhaps it sincerely explained the process by which the impulse of the other was being stirred.

Or — they were only seventeen, and not twenty. There could hardly be any weighty significance at all.

"We had a great piece of Peaceport at luncheon," Estabel told Aunt Esther shortly, in answer to her inquiries of their day. "Otherwise it was peaceful."

"Why, Estabel!" exclaimed Lilian in surprise.

"Oh, you don't know what I mean. You never will. You carry your peace with you."

"I thought everybody was lovely."

Then Estabel laughed. "Of course they were. I'm cross. There was just one little — ill thorn — and it pricked. Never mind."

"They were all here," said Aunt Esther, dropping a small bomb of the unexpected into the conversation.

"*Here!* What for?"

"To see me — and to wait for a horse to be shod — and to buy Lilian's bonnet. Young Mrs. Crestonfield took it, and paid ten dollars for it. I told her it was a sample, and that I could n't get another; and then, of course, she would have it all the more."

"But you *will* have another. I want you to let me make up that brown rough-and-ready, with maize-colored ribbons and brown and golden chrysanthemums," said Lilian gayly.

"This was n't their straight way to the High Quarries," persisted Estabel.

"No. But the horse's shoe was loose when they drove out of Henslee Place, and there's no blacksmith at the Corners; so they came round through here to the Ravine Road."

"Don't make another bonnet, Miss Hawtree. You don't know who may get it," said Harry Henslee, as he shook hands and bade good-night.

Estabel, in her turn, gave his hand a big squeeze. "You don't like some things any better than I do, when it comes to the point, after all."

"There's an eternal fitness in things," Harry answered.

"Chooty-choo!" said Miss Charlock all to herself on her way upstairs.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PICKED UP IN THE WOODS.

THE Clymer carriage and pair glittered and pranced through Stillwick, to bring Estabel Charlock over to Pequant.

Mrs. Clymer did not come for her; she really had a slight headache in the morning, and gave that reason in her little note and message. In more predominant fact, however, she preferred for Estabel the consequence and éclat of an arrival and welcome by her sole self in the face of the afternoon piazza company at the Sachem House. Awaiting her here, she could put the whole matter so much more in evidence than if they just drove up together with no occasion for a stir. Mrs. Clymer always liked to put her elegant movements in evidence. It was a turnout wasted, if she went and came without observation. She could hardly have understood Mrs. John Gilpin, whose chaise

"was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud."

Nothing superb that she could command was ever stayed three doors off.

The arrival and welcome were to be even more marked than she had forecasted. Circumstances played into her hand. Something like the interest and expectancy at the Bell of Edmonton was astir upon the broad colonnade of the Sachem at Pequant when the equipage at last rolled up the drive.

Estabel left Stillwick in her solitary state, arrayed

in a perfectly new and stylish carriage costume which had come in a box with injunction to put it on for the ride. She cared little for either matter. She was leaving Stillwick; she was going into a new location and surrounding of that same difficult and uncongenial world to which she could not fit; for which she felt in her own intuition, wiser than the determinate ambition of Aunt Vera, that she was unfitting herself continually by a forced and premature pushing forward to relation with it. "If only Aunt Vera would let me wait till I grow up to something!" she reiterated to herself. But it was of no use to say that again to Aunt Vera.

Marsden Woods reminded her, with their sweet, resinous odors and their still repose, too much of the happy coming of a few weeks before and its companionship; were too full of all delight that she was relinquishing to be enjoyed according to her wont. Across Shoreham Plains the way was dry and dull and glaring with sun. But there came a beautiful and novel relief in the Long Pines, through which the road led on to Pequant Beach, — a stretch of dense, spicy shade, open only here and there in bright glades, where pasture bushes grew, and big blackberries ripened, so far from villages and farm places that they were seldom raided. And in the surprise of quiet and freshness the girl's spirits rose; and when now and again a whiff of sea breeze stole across the sleepy downs, and mingled itself with the pine fragrance, she gathered cheer and thought, "There are the woods and the sea, after all; what does anything else matter!" Yet she ended with a sigh, "If only I had Lilian!"

So certain it is that we want the human, however — and all the more therefore — the material may environ us with charm and harmony. Estabel hummed to herself in an undertone, covered by the soft crush of wheels upon the sand and needles, and the thud of hoofs, a modified fragment of old "Greenland."

“What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o’er shore and isle,
Though every prospect pleases,
And only — folks — are vile!”

“I wonder how it *will* be! I ought n’t to say quite that, I suppose; but it’s in the hymn, and ‘vile’ is ‘vulgar,’ and it’s vulgar to call everybody else so, I am sure. Lilian would find somebody — but I’m not Lilian. That’s why I want her. She’s a born missionary. *Her* soul’s lighted, and she has enough to light up everybody’s else with. She’s no stingy wise virgin. I’m always under an extinguisher, or shut up in a dark lantern. Heigh-ho!”

A turn in the road brought them suddenly out into one of the brief spaces of turf and herbage. It wound and widened from the woodway to the left, offering enticement of wild blossom and fruit; there was the scent of pennyroyal and everlasting in the air and among shrubbery of low cedar and juniper; the blackberry vines were rampant and rich with their heavy clusters. Estabel longed to stop the carriage and get out and gather; but the time was limited. Her aunt expected her before the tea hour, and she was particular about her horses, to say nothing of the risk of high professional objections; so they rolled on into the closing shade again.

Just in the edge of forest line they came upon a singular group. Two young girls, — one of whom sat forlornly upon a stump, while the other, alert and anxious, stood erect, watching the road either way as for any sign of coming, — appeared to view by the wayside, and sprang up and forward at the approach of the carriage. Not country girls, very evidently, but daintily appareled, and quite obviously strange to their surroundings. A basket of berries and a loose heap of flowers and vine trails had been carelessly set down, and dropped, upon the ground at their feet. Beyond them, almost

hidden in a clump of trees, showed two slender wheels of some vehicle in an unaccountable position, as if it had been turned forcibly into the impenetrable thicket. A nearer look, as the coachman drew up his horses, discovered a light chaise, with a placid pony headed right in among the scrub, but standing patiently in the thills, which were very much compressed toward each other, and held him fast on either side between two sturdy birch boles.

"He got in there while we were just round here in the pasture," explained the young girl who first came forward, while the other, for some unintelligible reason, had turned away and gone back to her stump. Manifestly, she was not the responsible person, nor quite comfortable in the disclosure of their predicament.

"He always stands or follows on when we get out. We're so proud of his wise ways, and he's so proud to be trusted. How he came to do this I cannot tell; but there's no possibility of our getting him out, and this is such a lonely road. We've waited here nearly an hour, and nobody has come along."

"Which way were you going?" asked Estabel.

"Back to Pequant. We're staying at the Sachem. I'm Mary Brithwaite, and this is my mother's chaise and pony."

"I can take you both with me. I am going there myself. But Josiah could n't leave his horses, I'm afraid, to get yours out of his trouble. We can stop at the first house and send back help, if that will do."

Estabel spoke as coolly and politely and of course as if a keen look at the quarter-face of the girl who had sulked away had not revealed to her that which Miss Brithwaite now made an ineludible certainty.

"Oh, thank you! — Corinna! — It is my cousin, Miss Chilstone. — Miss —?"

"Estabel Charlock," was the grave reply, and the two, without either sign or demur, were introduced.

Mary Brithwaite was too entirely absorbed with her gratitude and her care for her pony to notice.

"We shall be so very much obliged," she went on. "Socrates will stand still, if I tell him to. We were afraid to leave him at first, or we should have walked on to find somebody. Now, he'll understand."

She went down into the underbrush to the pony's head. "Be a philosopher, Socrates. You're all right. You needn't be ashamed, and we won't desert you. We're only going for some one to take care of you. You hear? You'll keep quiet?"

Socrates almost seemed to smile as he turned his head lovingly over his mistress's shoulder. "How can I do anything else?" he seemed to ask.

"He's hard and fast, if he don't kick," Josiah assured the young lady with official gravity.

"He does n't know how to kick," Mary Brithwaite answered with dignity.

Corinna Chilstone took her place in silence opposite her cousin, as she might have done in a public vehicle. Estabel, by a well-timed movement, had made room for the latter beside herself. She did not think it necessary to offer a change of seats with Miss Chilstone.

"How lucky and how thankful we are!" said the cordial Mary again. "How could we tell who might come by? I was half afraid of anybody that it might be. Are n't you *glad*, Corinna?"

"We should have been glad of a haycart," returned that young woman, catching the opportunity for an ostensible civility that could compensate itself by a covert sneer. And that was all she vouchsafed, of utterance that could possibly include or refer to Estabel, the entire way. Mary Brithwaite would have been surprised, if the girl were not habitually moody. As it was, she covered her moroseness with all the kindly chatter she could think of.

A farmer was found who agreed to "hitch up" and

go back to the rescue of Socrates, and bring the "team" to the Sachem House.

"Guess ther won't be no defferkelty," he said; "onless an' indeed the shafts is broke. Ef they is, I'll tie 'em up, somehow er nother, so 's 't to tow it along. You girls need n't be the least grain concerned. I'll git the hoss home all right anyhow; an' nobody 'll meddle with the shay till we can see to it."

Mrs. Clymer sat expectant in the fringe of a piazza group, in elegant afternoon array, with her tatting between her brilliantly ringed fingers, and a book open upon her knee.

The group was anxious; there had been uneasy questioning and calculating about the other party, Mrs. Brithwaite and Mrs. Chilstone worrying about their daughters, who had been gone nearly four hours. Mrs. Brithwaite feared something like what had actually happened, from the limits of the pony's well-known sagacity and the possible imprudence of the young girls. She had said little, but she had watched and listened for every wheel, in the dread that Socrates, left too much to his own devices, might come trotting home, leaving his errant mistresses to theirs — and who could tell where?

Mrs. Clymer had remarked that her niece was later than she had supposed she would be; but in the real suspense her observation had dropped unheeded. She feared, with reason, that Estabel's advent might in like manner be overborne; all the more excited and important was she when her barouche wheeled round the curve, bearing its three occupants, and Mrs. Brithwaite, catching sight of Mary's eagerly outstretched head, and the wave of her handkerchief, started from her seat, and flew down the long steps to the drive, followed by her whole party of friends.

Everybody seemed to get down before Aunt Vera, although she certainly now had a common, if not a para-

mount right and interest with everybody. But for once Estabel was in the midst.

"You dear girl!" Mrs. Brithwaite said to her, still standing with her arm around her daughter's waist, as she had thrown it at her alighting, and reaching out her other hand to Estabel with warm seizure and thanks.

"I have been so terrified! You have been so good! Come up and tell me all about it, both of you." And she still held them so, although Mrs. Clymer made her way to them and claimed her niece with wondering and delighted welcome.

"Oh, don't mind!" said Estabel with embarrassment.

"It is nothing. I just happened to come along. Miss Brithwaite will tell you."

She would have extricated herself with her aunt and gone apart; but her aunt would not be extricated. The little story was told and received with renewed gladness and thanks, both to Estabel and Mrs. Clymer, so that the soul of the latter swelled with satisfaction, and the girl's correspondingly rebelled.

"Come, auntie; we must go upstairs, please," she said; and then when she had got her to the doorway, "Don't *push*!" she added, with low emphasis between closed teeth.

She did not mean impertinence; she never did; but character was asserting itself; the higher dominated; sixteen was admonishing forty.

Corinna Chilstone had slipped off at the first. "Such a fuss!" she whispered scornfully, on her part, to her mother. And Mrs. Chilstone, who played cribbage, responded vulgarly, "They have pegged one, I suppose they think. But *that* does n't win the game."

After that, for several days, Estabel sedulously avoided not only the Chilstones, but the Brithwaites.

"You foolish girl!" her aunt remonstrated. "You might have taken your place here at once, and you won't. You throw away your advantage."

"I don't want advantage. I don't see any."

"Why don't you give Corinna Chilstone a chance to speak to you? She owes it to you."

"I don't want her to owe me anything."

"What is the use of putting people under obligation, then?"

"Not the least use in the world. It is very disagreeable."

"Oh, you're an odd stick!" Mrs. Clymer ejaculated in despair.

Then Estabel relented, as usual. "I don't mean to be. And I really won't, whenever I can help it."

"Mrs. Brithwaite is as polite as possible."

"Mrs. Brithwaite is nice. I'm perfectly willing to be polite to her, but I won't run after her."

"You set people against you, and then you say they are n't nice."

"I think very likely I do, Aunt Vera. I seem to be made so."

"You're not so much made yet, that you can't be altered. It is your duty to be more approachable."

"I'm right here," answered Estabel, laughing.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ROARING GORGE.

ONE morning, after two days of strong east wind and mist, the sun flung away the fog, the weather vanes pointed to the westward, and the great rocks reared their gray breasts, softly illumined, against the crests of the incoming tide.

Roaring Gorge would be magnificent.

Everybody would be there.

Rocks are free to everybody.

Estabel went down with her aunt to see the sea.

Mrs. Clymer went down to see the sea—and the see-ers. One needs to spell the word with an extra “e” for fear of misconstruction. Doubtless there were but few in the company for whom it could be written as in the dictionary.

All over the jagged little promontory which ran out to challenge and oppose the waves, and had stood there till its very heart had been eaten out into a hollow, in and from which the surges poured with their angry thunder at the two high tides each day, were scattered groups of gay, curious watchers; the many colors of women’s array showing like beds of bloom in a strange rock garden of the ocean-side; the men in their white ducks and coats of gray or black, standing or moving about among them, like seabirds lighted, marveling, upon the one rare spot so pranked in all the wild cliff range that up and down the gale-swept coast made boundary and haunt for only strong-winged creatures of the storm.

Mrs. Clymer came down the rough side path that led to the narrow strip of pebbly beach below the steep, uncovered only at low water, and made her way to a flat projection just beneath the rocks of the casual "dress circle," most brilliantly crowded and gay with voices lifted in high keys to ring across the surf-boom, even in the comparative lull of its rhythmic retreat.

She made apparently her choice of place. She always did; but it was always in the fringe. She exchanged a nodding salute with those above her whom she knew; more was not possible. She escaped any palpable neglect. If Mrs. Clymer "pushed," it was not until she had got some bit of purchase.

Mrs. Brithwaite, sitting far up, with a few quiet people, beckoned her daughter from the gay young group next lower. "There are Miss Charlock and her aunt," she said, "on the Little Flat. Go down and ask them up here. We can make room. They haven't a nice place at all. It will be wet there presently."

Mary Brithwaite tripped off lightly, springing sure-footed from point to point toward the pathway, and came down with her mother's message to the two.

Mrs. Clymer rose alertly, with her thanks. Estabel followed her aunt's movement more restrainedly. In a moment more they were in a lovely, commanding position with the others above, whence they could look directly down into the deep cleft, and see the towering green avalanches come rearing on and fling themselves into the mouth of the narrow inlet, to rush far underneath and out of sight, roll reverberating through their hidden, mysterious, self-hewn chambers, and be hurled back by their own recoil at the present limit of their age-long work, to shatter in concussion with the next assaulting force, in a cloud of foam, that threw itself high up in air, and fell at last in gentle dispersion of small drops that often sprinkled their light spray over the heads of the laughing lookers-on.

Mrs. Brithwaite greeted Estabel and her aunt cordially. "The Gorge is grand to-day," she said. "And how beautifully the storm has cleared away."

Mrs. Clymer's sky was indeed clear; her day was radiant. But her reply was swept into silence by a fresh incoming thunder and tremendous outrush of the great spout.

"You were just in time," said Mary Brithwaite. A crawling spume was slipping backward into the sea from the surface of the Little Flat.

"It was so very kind of you," returned Mrs. Clymer. "We were certainly quite careless."

"Or humble," Estabel suggested; "till your ' Friend, come up higher ' beatified us."

The momentary pause was already being broken by the gathering rumble of another wave. Perhaps it was this, or it may partly have been the detected little self-satire in Estabel's speech, which suggested Mrs. Brithwaite's word before the crash came.

"It is useless to try to talk," she declared. "Those young people can scream, like the gulls. I think older human beings are willing to be hushed."

So hushed they were, gazing and listening — if receiving upon one's sense a crush of sound can be called listening — while the ceaseless grand impulsion of the sea and the roar of its diapason in the great open organ tubes of its channeled caverns, went on and on.

But after a while the immature human nature grew sated.

"There will be no end to this performance," declared a restless youth, impatient of vicarious activities. "There is no curtain to go down. We may as well be off and get up something for ourselves."

"It is almost bathing time," reminded one of the girls.

So there was a move. The little company broke up variously, climbing over the rocky way toward the

grassy bank, which having gained, they paused, regathering in knots for plan or parley.

Corinna Chilstone, under her aunt's care this morning, came round to her, bringing an eager party of young friends, and an appeal for concurrence in a fresh suggestion.

"We want to walk along the beach to Glynn Point," she told the lady. "Won't Molly come?"

"Mary is occupied at present with Miss Charlock," Mrs. Brithwaite answered pointedly.

"Oh, there's mamma!" exclaimed Corinna, seizing a diversion, and hastening with her proposition to the superseding authority.

Mrs. Chilstone had walked over from the hotel to meet the returning party, and had almost joined them.

"Corinna!"

Mrs. Brithwaite's voice summoned back her niece with decision.

"Your aunt is speaking to you," Mrs. Chilstone admonished her; and between the two Corinna had to yield. The Governor's widow could be decisive. To say nothing of position, the late Governor's estate was in her sole control and at her sole disposal; the Chilstone family was in consequence very much controlled and disposed by her also. So Corinna turned around again.

"I wish to *introduce* you to Miss Charlock," Mrs. Brithwaite spoke with unmistakable emphasis. "Miss Charlock, my niece, Miss Corinna Chilstone."

But the perverse young woman would not be abashed. Her little clan was all about her; she was observed; she thought herself supported; she would not be compelled from the course she had adopted.

She looked into her aunt's face with a slowly amused smile, as if gradually taking in a not very pointed little joke. "Oh, yes," she said lazily; "it has happened to me before." And giving Estabel a mere compulsory short nod, she was turning off again.

But Estabel stopped her squarely. This snub had been a double one. She disposed of it for two. With a slight step forward, and her head held high, she looked down upon Corinna's lesser height right royally, and with the sweetest air of playful condescension, said, so clearly that every one could hear, —

"Don't mind, Miss Chilstone. *I* respect Mrs. Brithwaite's kind intention. But an introduction only means, 'You may if you please,' you know; and if we don't please, it won't matter how many times we are introduced. Nothing can make us acquainted, unless we choose; not even if we were lost in the woods together for a week."

Deliberately, without the least flurry or excitement, she said it; and then, with a little movement that might hint a courtesy or a finality, she dropped back to Mrs. Brithwaite's side, frankly holding out her hand to her.

"Good-morning," she said. "I thank you and Miss Brithwaite for a very pleasant time. You are ready, Aunt Vera?" And Aunt Vera had no choice.

They walked away, leaving a little pause of well-bred surprise behind them.

"Now you *have* done it!" Mrs. Clymer exploded upon Estabel as soon as they were out of hearing.

"I have learned how," the girl answered calmly.

With the others, after the arrested instant, came comments.

"What an extraordinary girl!" said one stereotyped young lady.

"Gave it to her there, didn't she? Straight between the eyes!"

"Jove, she's plucky! She'll do, yet."

A jury of two — gilded youths — on the outskirts of the little throng mutually declared these findings of the case.

Meanwhile Corinna Chilstone was carrying it off, as

she thought, superiorly. "You never can tell what that sort of person will do next," she said. "That is why I keep clear of them."

"It is only *that* sort of person who can do the next thing so appositely," Mrs. Brithwaite answered. "But you are quite wise — on your own part — Corinna."

Then Corinna knew that her aunt was thoroughly displeased with her, and had definitively "taken up" Estabel Charlock.

"It is of no use to fight against Aunt Brithwaite's fads," she remarked nonchalantly to a companion, as they strolled away after the general lead toward the beach. "The only way is to let them drop."

Mrs. Chilstone tried to smooth things with her sister:

"Girls won't always take to each other, you know," she said. "This Miss Charlock may be very well in her way; but Corinna somehow has n't cared to notice her, and she seems up on her dignity accordingly."

"It *is* dignity," said Mrs. Brithwaite. "There is a difference between that and insolence."

"Oh, she has the making of it in her," admitted the woman of the world, appreciative after her sort, but obtuse to the distinction. "She might be in society fast enough, if it were n't for that impossible aunt."

By all which little interludes it may appear that Estabel had not absolutely "done it" — yet — in the sense which Mrs. Clymer apprehended.

She had only taken the enemy's battery, and turned its guns in effective self-defense.

That is not a desirable necessity in any human affairs, and it may be all very petty in this especial illustration; but the same human conditions and compulsions are in great and small; and we have not, alas! arrived at the millennium as yet.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HIGHLAND NORA.

IF it had stopped there, Estabel had really done pretty well for herself; counting it pretty well to have made an impression where she would certainly not have made a voluntary effort to impress at all.

Mrs. Brithwaite was stanch to her. Mary declared that she was "simply splendid." "Splendidly simple" would have put it more exactly; perhaps that was what Mary Brithwaite meant.

The gilded youths who had given verdict for her invited her to dance.

A large party came over from Peaceport for a week; tableaux and charades became the order of the evenings; the Peaceport girls remembered Estabel's clever management and beautiful acting at Henslee Place, and she was brought into request.

It was so simply her delight that she never thought of compliment, but took her part just as she had played Ellen Douglas in Aunt Esther's orchard — to her real comradery in song and story, rather than to any polite, admiring society audience.

She was "Highland Nora," in Scott's charming ballad, and was most thoroughly and essentially her own proud little self in it; with Harry Henslee, who had come down for a few days with them, as "the Earlie's son;" and no less a person than Dr. North himself, also persuaded into a twenty-four hours' visit, as "Old Callum." To Estabel's astonishment he acquiesced without so much as a "pooh-pooh!" to her request. He

seemed somehow really glad to see her and oblige her; and gave himself up, apparently, for the brief, unusual space, to such amusement as was offered. Once in a great while something in his nature broke, as it were, through a sternly maintained abstinence and restraint, and betrayed a different possibility — the man who, ordinarily, Ulick North would not be.

Mrs. Brithwaite read the recitative verses beautifully as the acted picture went on, leaving the quoted lines to the personages themselves, the alternations playing in to each other with absolute smoothness and great effect.

“Hark, what Highland Nora said.”

she began, the words falling musically upon the silence as the curtain slowly rose and disclosed Nora, in plaid and kirtle, with snooded hair, and an eagle plume in her little Highland cap. And Nora took it up with quick and naive *empressment*: —

“The Earlie’s son I wadna wed,
Should a’ the race o’ Nature dee,
An’ nane be left but him an’ me.
For a’ the gowd an’ a’ the gear,
An’ a’ the lan’s, baith far an’ near,
That ever valor lost and won,
I wadna wed the Earlie’s son.”

And “Old Callum,” who had stolen with ancient, tottering steps upon the stage behind her, began in tremulous falsetto —

“A maiden’s vows” —

“Old Callum spoke,”

interpolated Mrs. Brithwaite’s clear, sweet chorus — and Old Callum went on: —

“Are lichtly made, an’ lichtly broke.
The heather on the mountain height
Begins to bloom in purple light;

The frost win' sune shall sweep away
 That lustre deep fra' glen an' brae;
 But Nora, ere its bloom be gone,
 May blithely wed the Earlie's son."

With a proud light in eye, and spring in step, and
 vibrance in voice, Nora came farther forward: —

"The wildin' swan the lake's clear breast
 May barter for the eagle's nest;
 The Awe's fierce stream may backward turn;
 Ben Cruachan fa', an' crush Killoburn;
 Our kilted clan, when blood is high,
 Before their foes may turn an' fly:
 But I, were a' these marvels done,
 Wad never wed the Earlie's son."

Anything more natively superb than her air and tread
 across the stage, as these last lines fell ringing from her
 scornful lips that curled away from the flashing edges
 of small white teeth, could hardly be imagined; and
 then Old Callum stole apart, but lingered in the side
 distance, keenly watching, while the last stanza was
 recited with a telling quietness, and just before it ended
 appeared the consummating illustration — the Highland
 Maid and her lordly lover; the cairngorm jewels gleam-
 ing in his bonnet, waved exultingly in one hand, while
 the other held sweet Nora round the waist, her pride
 all given away, her eyes gently shining, her lips shy
 and tender, and her head bent softly toward his shoul-
 der: —

"Still in the water lily's shade
 Her wonted nest the wild swan made;
 Ben Cruachan stands as firm as ever;
 Still onward flows the Awe's fierce river;
 To shun the clash of foeman's steel
 No Highland brogue has turned the heel;
 But Nora's heart is lost and won:
 She's wedded to the Earlie's son."

She came off the scene, when the curtain had fallen, laughing. The Earlie's son looked at her with a certain newly touched delight. But she was back again instantly, in herself; she was Estabel Charlock and he only Harry Henslee; it had not mattered who he was, except that she could act intimately with him in the cousinly intimacy of her whole life. In the song, she had been Highland Nora, whom strong love, in the abstract, such as Estabel might only know abstractly, had vanquished into happiness.

Old Callum stood, oblivious, where he had been left.

"Wad she wed the Earlie's son?" was dimly shaping itself to query in his mind.

But what had he to do with it, if she would? He supposed money and family were apt to carry the day, by some latent force, however scorned and unacknowledged.

Estabel Charlock was a woman; she would doubtless do as women do.

He shook himself alertly to his natural height and poise. Old Callum was no more. Dr. North betook himself to his own room, and changed his dress.

Out in the audience, if there were any who remembered the "Lady of Hensleigh" and their curiosity concerning her, they forgot it now; a new unspoken suggestion replaced it; one of those "what ifs?" sprang up, that are always springing, and as continually dying out.

"Are they cousins, you say? — Why, yes; his grandmother was a Charlock — that wonderful Eleanor, you know. I never thought of it before. Really, it would n't be very strange. — How grandly she did it!"

Estabel was very near the top of the local, temporary little social wave.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONLY JUST BEHIND HER FACE.

DR. NORTH went back to his office and his patients the next morning. A day and a night were the most he would ever, and very rarely, spare at once, although his ordinary work could be safely left with his college chum and medical exchange. There was a curious feeling in him, somehow, which he would not examine to diagnose, that he rather wished he had not spared them now. "It only discontents a fellow," he said, as he smoked his solitary pipe at bedtime.

Dr. North knew very well that his life must probably run on present lines for years to come. Society—"nonsense"—were not for him. They could lead to nothing. They only unfitted. He looked facts in the face so much more coolly and reasonably now than he had done in that short, rudely shattered dream of four years ago. Then, love and hope could have done everything. Love and hope were gone. Unrelenting, practical realities alone remained.

"What a fool I was!" he exclaimed inwardly. He did not mean four years ago; he meant last night. He thought he meant only his absurd ballad acting.

Before breakfast he had found Estabel alone on the piazza that overlooked the sea. She loved it at that time, before it became the *mise en scène* of the flutter-life of the great hotel.

She stood by the rail as Dr. North came out. He stopped on the threshold, and would have turned, but that she turned more quickly.

"Good-morning!" she said gayly. "The morning

says that itself. You can't be going to spoil the sea breeze with tobacco smoke?" For the doctor had cigar and match in hand.

"I thought you did not mind?"

"Not indoors, where I'm used to it, and where it's stuffy at any rate. But where we can get this! I meant you would spoil it for yourself."

"As people do a good many things." But he scratched his match and flung it away, and held his cigar unlighted. He might as well speak to the child; he would be off when breakfast should be over.

"You had a fine time last night," he said commonplace. "Different from this. But I suppose you liked it—as you do the cigar—indoors. Rather a singular idiosyncrasy, that, too. The contrary is more common."

"Is n't the *contrary* very common with you, Dr. North?" she retorted to the bit of cynicism she detected in his remark.

Dr. North laughed. Estabel's directness, and the touchiness so easily provoked to it, always amused him.

"I thought it seemed to be 'flowers and rainbows.' Are n't you rather in the midst just now?"

"There is n't any midst. It does n't hold anything. I think scarcely anything does. What does it amount to? I shall never see these people again—most of them. I don't know anything of their lives, nor they of mine."

"All those 'anythings' in the sense of nothings. Yet you liked it. And possibly it amounts to an indication that you may have more of the same sort, when you want it and will take the trouble for it. I suppose you know that you are clever—and that you are growing pretty, after all."

Whether he said that for keen test of her, or aggravation to himself, or simply because he could not help saying it, would not be easy to determine. He did not

always understand himself when he was with Estabel, shrewdly as he may have thought, or sought, to understand her.

"Do you truly think that, Dr. North?" There was unmistakable delight in her quick response.

"Perhaps I would better not have said it."

"Oh, I am glad you did. It was kind of you. It has done me good."

Her bright, pleased look met his without embarrassment. Would he rather she had been embarrassed? Would he have thought better of her—or would he have been better content with the personal power of his own brusque compliment?

Fresh and sweet with the joy of the morning—of the day and of her own young life—the beauty of the morning was certainly upon her. She was rounding into fair contours. The brow was widened with her dawning thought; all her color was deeper, stronger with life. Her pale-tinted hair was turning tawny; she was going to be one of Holmes's "leonine blondes." She had the "lion's eye," as an artist has called it; the feature in which dwells the lion's nobleness; the deeply dinted lids, the firm, brave setting; the hue of chrysoberyl, lighted with golden fire.

Standing there, in her simple gingham morning gown buttoned from throat to belt, with narrow linen collar and cuffs of faultless white, she flashed this look of a beautiful moment upon Ulick North.

He tried to see nothing in it but her gladness at being told that she was pretty.

Footsteps and voices sounded in the hall behind them; people were coming out; Dr. North walked away.

"A woman's heart is only just behind her face," was the silent irony with which he was defending himself—from what?

To-night, with his lonely pipe and these intruding reminiscences, he grew restlessly irritated.

He took down a big volume from his professional shelves; perhaps to verify, if possible, the extraordinary anatomical assertion he had made to himself some dozen hours before.

But it was not physiology that puzzled or could help him; his question was of no bodily organism whose place and use might be defined and action predicated; it was of that curious thing to him, a woman's soul; what it was made of, where it was seated, what it would be likely to do — with the woman and with whatever other human life hers touched.

"It is right behind her face — and stops there," he was repeating determinedly to himself, and thinking of a woman who had once most nearly interested him, and of a girl who was beginning — in other fashion — quite philosophically, he thought — to interest him now.

"It is 'how I look,' and 'how people think I look; ' it is 'Can I be the belle of the ball?' and 'Rose colored curtains for the doctors.' It begins with Flora MacFlimsey and it ends with Mrs. Skewton — always."

That "always" was a word of habit with him; his deductions were general and decisive; it was his greatest mistake. In asserting his rule, he disregarded the exceptions.

He did not yet understand Estabel Charlock at all.

Meanwhile, Estabel was thinking over what he had said to her, and the way in which he had left her without another word. It came back to her — his words and ways were very apt to come back to her in a kind of judgment — with a keen, mixed remembrance.

There was the pleasure that Ulick North, who had told her once so scornfully that she might stand looking in the glass forever, but she would never be a beauty — had owned, to her face, quite needlessly, and as if he could not help it, that she was growing pretty. He had not put that other assertion precisely as she chose to put it now; that was the shape to which her mind

had moulded it; she drew her own corollaries, as he drew his, and the little hurt and discouragement of this had fixed itself within her as one of the hard small facts accepted from her experience.

On the other hand, there had been his look, as he regretted and half took back what he had said; disclaimed, at any rate, the possible inference that he was personally pleased with her. There had been a touch of the old scorn, a contempt that she was pleased with herself; she had seen it upon lip and eyelid as he had turned away. Her own inward utterance was the complement to his, "He thinks I am only skin deep."

She knew so well that it was not mere trivial vanity that moved her; it was the justified longing for her part and share of the everlasting grace and harmony which are the outcome of the beautiful, everlasting truth. It would be the same with her behind a kitchen-garden fence or in a grand assembly. She wanted to be. On a desert island she would have been happy as Miranda; a creature made in loveliness, and waiting for its lovely mission. No expression but of the best, in actual and possible, would have been tolerable or in genuine relation to her. Caliban and Sycorax were not of her humanity.

Why could not Ulick North recognize in her this latent verity? If she cared for praise, for finding that she could please, it was that this confirmed her in her hope, — that beauty and pleasing, and all that these two signified, in a life not yet fathomed by her or even guessed, were not apart from her and unattainable, but that she should yet become, and illustrate her own one form and quality of a divine and multifold meaning.

How much of this may be true of many a girl who prinks before her glass and whose face lights up at a compliment? Judge not.

With the love and desire for beauty, born and growing in her, there was also born and growing what by no

means is invariably twin to beauty sense; that is the sense artistic, which achieves beauty. It was greatly this to which her external development was owing. Since she had outgrown her childish carelessness and had learned to take thought, her intuitions of the fitting and becoming asserted themselves quite unexpectedly to those who had known her long before, and almost as much so to herself. She was often surprised at her own perceptions and discoveries in matters of toilet and apparel. She divined somehow what "would do;" she felt with discomfort what would not. It came about that nothing was ever incongruous with her, though in many things she was — and in consequence — peculiar.

She was one of those persons who have a style of their own; of whom observers say so, with the addition, "It would not do for anybody else."

Her aunt said it to her by way of criticism and deprecation. "I do not wish it to," was the reply.

"But you would look better if you would wear things as others do. The fashion is always becoming."

"I don't think so, Aunt Vera. It is only 'up-to-date.' People think it pretty to be that."

"What everybody thinks, is."

"Oh, Aunt Vera! Is n't the world ever mistaken? What are art and science and preaching for, then?"

"*Very well,*" answered Aunt Vera, with the emphatic intonation by which she was accustomed to make those two words end a losing argument. "I only *say* you would look better if you would drop your hair across your ears, as the other girls all do."

"Somebody must have set that fashion who had ugly ears," Estabel rejoined. "I have n't."

Truly, the exquisitely curved and exactly placed little aural appendages, above which the soft, thick hair was swept back into braids that were coiled and lost in the knot behind, well lifted from the graceful, slender nape, were never so made and put on to be hidden.

"And you comb it too high at the back," continued Mrs. Clymer, whose whole soul enlisted itself in a point of discussion like this. "They don't do it so."

"Why should it always be 'they,' and not I? I don't do it for 'they.' It suits me. It would contradict my nose if I made the bunch down low. I should be all mixed. The line of expression would be broken up."

Mrs. Clymer had not the faintest conception of the line of expression, but as she looked more observantly at Estabel's profile and the general effect, and saw something spirited and unique in the carriage of head and set of features, something uplifted — not "up-tilted" — in the free-drawn line of the nose, and a light, strong bearing in the curve and poise of the slim, round neck, she had to confess to herself that it all went well together, and that a final touch had adapted itself to all, however unconventionally, in the gathering up of the softly glistening locks and the putting in of hairpins.

It was the same with Estabel as to the tie of a ribbon, the placing of a trimming; everything took character, seemed shaped to and grown from, herself; it was not put on. Whatever came from the hands of milliner or dressmaker suffered a change in her own; it took some turn that made it hers. Her throat laces, for example, were gathered up, instead of falling down, as then commonly arranged; a necklet that she was fond of wearing, of lava stones in little oval rims, confined them so. Sometimes it was a velvet ribbon with a golden filigree clasp. "I look better this way," she would tell her aunt; and then say something again about that "line of expression."

"I don't know what you mean; I don't believe you do yourself," Mrs. Clymer would reply impatiently.

"Oh, yes, I do. I learned it from Lilian. I have learned a great deal from her."

"Pshaw! I suppose the carpenter teaches her!"

"I think He does, auntie," Estabel answered, with secret, serious meaning which reached Mrs. Clymer not at all; not even when she added, "I think she gets the true line and rule for everything."

At a point like this Mrs. Clymer would have to drop the discussion. Estabel always managed, she said, to get her own way by jumping some fence or running up against some blind.

Yet she would look the girl's dress over, as she had done her head and face, and perceive that something was there beyond her reach or altering. So she would say no more, only ceasing, as was her way, with the air of letting alone the incorrigible and inwardly reserving a commiseration of herself.

But when one evening young Mrs. Crestonfield came and sat beside her in the drawing-room, and praised Estabel's style and figure as "peculiarly effective," saying "She understands herself; she knows what suits her exactly; and so few persons do, you know," Aunt Vera experienced a cheerful conversion, and came to the peace of a comfortable conclusion, according to her habit of resting at last in the compensations of the inevitable; admitting to herself that she might as well leave Estabel to her own little pertinacities in such things, since they seemed sometimes, with a sort of simpleton's luck, to turn to a curious, accidental advantage, after all.

Her conviction did not go far enough, however, to relieve her mind of other perplexing responsibilities; she could not leave to Estabel her social choice and freedom; she could not trust her with the shaping of her own associations and her true and natural self-expression in them. It was impossible for her to imagine that here also a finer nature might assert itself; that here also Estabel might instinctively "understand, and know exactly what befitted her, as indeed few do." That conception and admission were at present far beyond

Aunt Vera. She appraised not by intrinsic value, which would set its own real mark in its own due time and place, but by the passing, superficial estimate of a very small and superficial world.

This small and superficial world was presently to receive a singular small shock. The uncompromising young nature forced into contact with it had something of the yet undiscovered property of dynamite. Pressed a little beyond its bearing, it exploded its way out of limit. There is something grand and generous in such expansion; it makes way through rude obstacle for better condition. For the moment, however, it startles; it scatters things; people run away from it.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MAY QUEEN.

ESTABEL — notwithstanding the Chilstone opposition, in which Corinna still led her little set simply because she had so begun to lead, and to resign in that point would have been to resign leadership altogether and follow with the rest — was becoming a success. It might be only here, just now, and for a little time; it was with an accidental party, with whom she might hereafter, as she had said, have nothing more to do. It related merely to this little summer holiday at Pequannock and the casual holiday amusement to which she could contribute. So she supposed, in her unconsciousness of making deeper impression in her own honest way; and so Mrs. Clymer insisted, when urging any advance or concession to the prominent gay coterie which demonstratively held the floor.

"Those quietly exalted people are *too* high," she declared. "They have really nothing to do with every-day movement. They are away up in the firmament, and of no earthly use. They don't carry the tide."

"I don't care for the tide," said Estabel. "It would only leave me high and dry, or fling me on the rocks. I'd rather sail by the North Star."

The tide set out one day to cast away a little pleasure boat.

A little girl not more than fifteen arrived at the hotel with her father. In her boarding-school vacation he was giving her a "good time." The child had no mother. He was a rich man, had made his own money,

and knew nothing intermediate between the counting-room accumulation and the taking possession, with its results, of the world, its consequence and delights, which he supposed lay easily open all about him, only awaiting the time when he should choose to present his claim. That was to be, in his full intent, when his little Olympia, all he had or cared for on the earth except his money, and that but for her sake, should be quite grown up. How strange it is that this dear and sacred motive may be so crudely illustrated that the world will only jeer and laugh!

A lovely heart idyl was reciting itself in the presence and among the forms of this little summer crowd at Pequant; and the summer crowd thought it was a funny farce.

Estabel saw, in caricature, what she might have come to.

The father and daughter had taken together a beautiful round of journey. They had been to Trenton and Niagara; they had sailed down the St. Lawrence among the Thousand Islands; they had come through the White Mountain grandeurs; now they had brought up by the mighty limit line of the glorious, all-surrounding sea.

They had been conspicuous, in a certain way, everywhere; they always had the best places at table, and the most obsequious attendance; for the head waiters had golden fees, and the palms of lesser personal servitors were crossed with uncalculated frequent silver.

They had been dressed up all the way; for traveling, for dining, for driving, for evening display, their appointments had been of the most lavish, most costly, most varied, most splendid. "My little Olympia shall have everything," Mr. Tucker said to those with whom he fell, or struggled, into conversation.

But he could not give her everything.

He could not give her a place here among the elect

of Peaceport and Topthorpe. He could not even give her a dance, though he brought her into the evening assembly decked like a stage princess or fairy queen, unless he danced with her himself. This he did, loyally and devotedly — when the half-formed quadrille set did not, as sometimes happened, melt away from them and fill up elsewhere, to their innocent surprise; although with his half-million dollars and his only forty-two years, he might, with a different *savoir faire*, have found partners for himself, and begun possibly at that end to accomplish his affectionate paternal purpose.

Olympia Tucker danced as she dressed, in ornate fashion. She did beautiful steps, that had been altogether discarded by the initiated. She glissaded, chased, pas-le-basqued, made little cuts with her slender heels, curtsied with a sweep that demanded space behind her, which was sometimes cleared and sometimes not; in the latter contingency there was collision, upon which she would swiftly reverse her curtsy, with a little French "*pardonnez*" really due from the other side.

She was "great fun," the young observers decreed; and in a more or less covert way they made the most of her.

Mr. Tucker made scrape-acquaintance with the young swells upon the piazza and in the bowling alleys; they were willing he should offer them the manly cigar, or opulently pay the scot for a rolling match; it evidently pleased him, and "among men" it did not matter. In the evening drawing-room they had no use for him.

One night he broke out of Coventry — not knowing perhaps that he had been in it. He seized a fortuitous opportunity and introduced Fred Crestonfield to his daughter. And Fred Crestonfield took her out for a waltz, but he lifted his handsome eyebrows over his shoulder at his compeers grouped and wondering in a corner. When he had landed her again at her father's

side, and she had childlikely thanked him, he gave the word and the joke to the others. "It's your turn now, the rest of you," he said, with a laugh. "Give her a good show."

And the hint took. For that one evening poor little Olympia Tucker was to be fooled to the top of her bent; she was to be made a belle — and then, of course, let down again.

The whisper went round among some of the girls. It happened to reach Estabel. "It is a shame!" she said, and refused Fred Crestonfield, who came to ask her for a cotillon. And no dance would she take part in, while over and over again the victim of the sport was being led out, scrambled for, led out again, and put through all her flourishes, to her own delight, which innocently accentuated all, and to that of the quizzing, romping set who took up her style in a just sufficient mimicry exquisitely to amuse themselves, and not to flout her openly and without disguise.

"This is real dancing. You have set us a good example," said one of her partners in a gay round. "We had almost forgotten our dancing school." And Olympia thought she was complimented.

The girl wore a dress of gold-colored gauze, ribbon-striped, which shimmered around her in expanse of three full skirts over silk of the same hue. At the waist a golden band gathered in the rotundity; heavy gold bracelets were on her arms; a great, gay wreath of yellow honeysuckles that had come in a box of finery from Paris, and was of course all right, crowned her head and fell in sprays upon her shoulders.

"Cinderella in her pumpkin coach!" said one.

"Queen o' the May," declared another.

And with her evident delighted triumph, her flushed acceptance of a central consequence, her conspicuous coronal, the name took. For the brief hour, of which she suspected not the mockery, she was to be May Queen.

Estabel sat looking on, divining all; her flimsy little handkerchief and lace fan crushed in an angry grasp; ready to spring, to smite, to cry out.

Twice she had started to go to Mr. Tucker and bid him take his child away; and twice her heart had failed her, as she saw the glow of his, warm with a loving satisfaction, shining — yes, tenderly brimming — in his watching eyes.

But the moment came.

A cotillon was turned into a reel — the Coquette.

Olympia's turn came to go down the contradance.

Hands were outstretched to her; heads leaned forward; each young masculine pretended to be eager, anxious to be chosen. She thought it was all real; she flitted from one to another up and down, butterfly fashion, until she had passed the entire line; then turned, and with a merry galop sped up outside and down again, alone, leading the whole troop after her. She certainly did in her gleeful intoxication provoke to further humoring.

"Form for the Boulanger," came the order for a second change; and the great circle of dancers spread out around the room.

The basket figure — the grand right and left — the all hands round and reversed, were danced; then the youth who had assumed the direction of the medley and gave the signals for the music, held up his hand. The players struck into the "May Queen" with spirit.

Up to this point, the elder lookers-on had comprehended nothing but the merriment. Many of them did not quite approve the apparent fact that it was the keener for the ingenuous exultation of the little flower-crowned damsel. But nobody, even if any of them had known all that Estabel Charlock knew, could have interfered without making a painful *éclaircissement*. Chaperons had sent out anxious glances, had lifted finger or fan warningly to their young charges; but the

climax came, and quite beyond their apprehension; beyond that, very likely, of any but the chief participants.

"All forward and back," was the call. "Chassez to partners; chassez across; forward again; back, leaving first lady in centre."

Olympia Tucker had been first lady in the top quadrille, and at the head of the reel. Her partner led her out and left her.

The music, in gay, rapid measure, went on. A few voices began to hum, while feet kept time, and one or two broke forth with words; —

"Of all the glad new year, mother,
The maddest, merriest day;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother,
I'm to be Queen o' the May!"

Of course there were pretext and cover in the familiar inspiration of the tune; but the application was too patent; and when, with a laugh, "First lady pas seul" was ordered almost simultaneously, it was manifest that the clock had struck, and Cinderella was deserted.

She stood bewildered in the middle of the great room under the blaze of the chandelier; there was the whirl of a gay ring of laughing couples, matched as might happen; under the exchange of partners and the general wild scamper, the escape from a confessed insult was feebly made; the fellow who had danced with Olympia was tying his shoe somewhere in a corner.

Olympia Tucker stood stock-still.

This had not been expected. In the *melée* she might have made her unsupported retreat. In fact, the whole affair had taken unpremeditated shape, one thing inciting another; and more than half the company were involuntary, uncomprehending accessories.

There was but the one painful moment.

Mr. Tucker strode forward from the doorway.

But a girlish figure was before him; a girl's arm

was round his daughter's waist; an imperious young hand was lifted, outspread, repellant, toward the band. The music stopped.

"You are mean, cruel! Every one of you!" rang out upon the offenders' ears in a clear, indignant voice. And Estabel Charlock walked down the room, her arm still round Olympia's waist; on the other side, her father drew her hand within his own.

The next morning the Tuckers had gone from Pequant.

Mrs. Clymer rejoiced at one thing in the midst of her angry dismay; she had already mentioned in the house that she would leave on Monday.

Between the Thursday hop and the Monday departure was a wearisome time to Estabel. Aunt Vera was almost too much displeased for words, yet she could not be Aunt Vera without words; and the words came, in little sudden whips, without preface or warning.

"It was none of your business," she said sharply, when Estabel was folding a dress for her.

"It seemed to me it was somebody's business. But I am very sorry—for you—Aunt Vera. I can't seem to help being a trouble."

"Why could n't the girl go and sit down?"

"Perhaps she would have rushed and screamed if she had stirred. She stood there rigid."

"And now you may stand rigid. You'll be frozen fast enough. And just as you had begun to be warmed up to. It's beyond all patience."

"I do suppose it is—as you look at it, Aunt Vera; and I'm very sorry. But I could n't do any other way."

"*Very—well.* Perhaps you'll find out what way you can do now. I can't advise you."

This was how it was in their own rooms. Outside, in the small opportunity that Estabel gave, there certainly was a change, but an indefinite one. She was

not remanded to Coventry; there had been justice and heroism in her rebuke and interference; there was generosity and sympathy enough to recognize that; but these had been too pronounced; "it was exceedingly irregular, my dear!" It "would not do" to cut, in that fashion, across polite lines; links were intricate; a whole social order could not be broken into with one sweeping assault; the world is shy of fierce young iconoclasm.

Estabel was even admired for what she had done, but it was with a very cautious reservation. "It was not at all *wise*," the chaperons said. "It should have been left to us." And although they were kindly civil, they no longer drew her in among them. Even Mrs. Brithwaite said to her, "My dear, it is never best to make a scene."

"But, Mrs. Brithwaite, was n't the scene made already?" Estabel asked her wistfully. She could hardly bear to have Mrs. Brithwaite's friendship lessen.

"It was very bad," the lady owned; "and you were brave and generous; but perhaps you did too much. Perhaps, indeed, the young person got a wholesome lesson."

"Dear Mrs. Brithwaite! If you could have heard what she said to me! 'I suppose I have been a fool. I should not have cared so sillily, only I thought my dear father was pleased to have me noticed. He thinks so much of me.'"

The tears started in Estabel's eyes as she repeated the words; and there was a moisture in Mrs. Brithwaite's as she heard.

"And what did you say to that, dear?"

"I told her the fools were on the other side, and that there were n't but two or three of them, anyway; that there were lots of kind hearts in the room all the time."

Then Mrs. Brithwaite kissed her.

"You must come right back into your own place, Estabel," she said. "There are to be charades tomorrow night, and we shall want you."

"Thank you — for everything — *dear* Mrs. Brithwaite. I understand. But I have acted enough." The last words were said with a touch of proud, yet gentle self-satire, for which her friend liked her the better.

Mrs. Clymer was considerably appeased when Estabel told her of this conversation. But she still said, "It won't greatly signify. There are n't enough Mrs. Brithwaites to count."

"I think there are, Aunt Vera," answered Estabel. "And I think it depends a good deal on which side of yourself you present, how people — and what sort of people — take you. Don't you remember how much trouble you had once, to teach me to offer things by the handle?"

That evening Estabel stepped out of her own room into a balcony that ran across that front of the house. Several apartments opened on to it; it was a quiet, upstairs, ladies' resort.

Aunt Vera was busy writing letters; they were tacitly agreed not to appear in the drawing-room just yet; later, Mrs. Clymer meant to drop in for half an hour; she by no means intended a self-banishment.

The shadow of a great tree and the projection of a blind fastened open at right angles shielded Estabel where she sat, on a low wicker chair just outside her own sashed door.

Steps approached from the farther corner of the wing, and two persons paused just beyond the screening blind, without, she thought, perceiving her. Afterward, she doubted. They took possession of a settee that had been drawn forward to the rail, and sat with their backs to her. If she had been within her room, that warm, still, summer night, when doors and windows

were all open, they would have been near enough for her to hear what she did hear presently. In her after-thought it occurred to her as quite possible that she had been meant to hear.

The comers were Corinna Chilstone and another young person to whom Corinna had violently attached herself, or permitted herself to be violently appropriated by, of late.

"She 'll be dropped now, of course," said the other young person.

"Thank goodness, *I've* got nothing to drop. I never picked her up. Aunt Brithwaite and Mary will have that knot to cut."

"That Char-lock, you mean," said the companion, with stupid endeavor at some pun that was not there.

"I said nothing about a lock of any sort — if it *could* be cut," rejoined Corinna, with a snub as stupid. She was evidently out of humor — in every sense of the word.

The truth was, she had been snubbed herself by Aunt Brithwaite, a little while before, when she had spoken to her of that same inevitable "dropping" which would come now.

"She will drop *up*, you will find," Mrs. Brithwaite had answered coolly. "Courage and nobleness always do, whatever mistakes they may appear to make."

So Corinna was cross with her newly chosen friend, who on her part was forbearing; not that she had such all-enduring fondness for the girl herself as amounted to the blessed Pauline charity, but she did wish very much to be intimate with the Brithwaites.

"She goes to your school, does n't she?" The question was asked as with sympathetic deploring sense of such unwarrantable intrusion.

Corinna thanked goodness again. "*That's* all over," she said. "Satterwood's getting to be much too common. Ever so many of us are leaving this year. I'm

going to Madam Sanjan's." She spoke the name with as much complacent consequence as if the first thing she would have to learn under the new tuition would not be to pronounce properly "Madame Saint-Jean."

"Thank goodness, too!" said Estabel, barely under her breath, as she got up and walked away.

She went back to Tophthorpe with her aunt on Monday, almost jubilant under her cloud of misadventure; for which, indeed, she took herself to task presently, wondering if she ought to tell Aunt Vera this that she had heard and was so glad of.

She was determined, however, that she would not go to Madame Saint-Jean's, and she thought she had a right so to determine.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THINGS: AND SPIRIT.

THE tide of a certain fickle fashion had ebbed away from Mr. Satterwood's school. And Mr. Satterwood was not sorry.

Madame Saint-Jean taught in French. No American was spoken within the school precincts. In this way the young Tophthorpe girls were to be trained into good Americans, such as should hereafter go to Paris.

Madame Saint-Jean's terms were forty dollars a quarter, while Mr. Satterwood's charge was only twenty-five. Madame Saint-Jean limited her number of pupils strictly to fifty, while Mr. Satterwood's was elastic at seventy-five. These last two conditions kept the new school free from many who, however good Americans they might be, would not, in all probability, be of the elect for that hereafter in hope of which the chosen were rejoicing. "*Le meilleur monde ce n'est pas tout le monde,*" one of madame's patronesses said to her — with Tophthorpean idiom and accent — in very complacent French.

Mr. Satterwood's school had outgrown such boundary. All his second-floor rooms were thrown together now, as class-rooms. The first class held the original room, and the few in it who had been there from the beginning still maintained a certain tone of discriminative privilege which shut from its close communion the unincorporate multitude. But the influence was feeble. The multitude did not know that it was excluded. Practically, the excluded were the exclusives themselves.

At Madame Saint-Jean's, where the educational stampede had established a commonalty untouched of the common, there was the opposite drawback to an entire complacency. Where all was aristocratic, there was no immediate distinction. There was a touch of tameness in the equality. The satisfaction resulted outside in general contact. To be one of "madame's girls" was to be Tip-Topthorpean in young society.

Mr. Satterwood was not sorry. It had been greatly his own doing, the effect of his own quiet self-showing in the ruling principles of comparative estimate. He believed in humanity, in personality, in character; not in clique, mould, facsimile. He wanted mind and soul to educate, individuality to study and draw forth. Each pupil was to him herself, no matter who her father was or in what street she lived. Real family, real inheritance, of the strong, the high, the noble, he valued and revered. Artificial pseudo-dignities were to him no dignities at all. He came from the land of old hereditary honors, but it was the living perpetuation of an absolute honor that he solely recognized. Any other pretense, here in America, seemed to him, an Englishman, the most anomalous absurdity. So the pretenders found him out; he was not half English enough; the enthusiasm of their patronage reacted.

The ebbing of one tide, nevertheless, was the flowing in of another. As the waters that obeyed the fashion pulse retreated, a purer current came through quieter channels. Girls were sent to him by carefully wise parents, from homes of a higher thought and culture; the neighboring university town was represented, notwithstanding the then practical difficulty of distance; and from much farther off, judges' and senators' daughters came, suitable temporary homes being found for them in the city, as was easy in that comparatively uncrowded, Arcadian day; one house was opened near his own by Mr. Satterwood himself, and put in charge of a

discreet, kind matron, to meet the growing need. Everything was changed; the old element was superseded.

Estabel found choice of friendship among the choice. But for Aunt Vera's change toward her, her cold giving up of hope and ambition in her behalf, and maintenance of a mere duty attitude and negative kindness in the charge she had undertaken, the young girl would have been very happy.

Margery Wyman, from Montpelier, whose father and mother were in Washington during the season of Mr. Wyman's congressional duties, was one of these incidental friends, and became intimate in Mount Street.

"All very well," Mrs. Clymer persisted, when she spoke at all of the present aspect of affairs. "But you will never live in Montpelier. It is only for the time being. It will all come to an end, and then where will you be? You will never be in a *set* in Tophthorpe."

"I don't care for a set. Bother a set," Estabel replied with the terseness Mr. Josh Billings has more recently used in his remark concerning a fly. "I can't bear a 'set' of china. There are lots of ugly and useless things in it. I'd rather pick up nice separate bits as I go along."

"Odds and ends," rejoined Mrs. Clymer contemptuously. "That is n't society."

Estabel's illustration, like many of her ideas and expressions, was ahead of time. The day of diverse, miscellaneous bric-a-brac was not yet.

"Let her alone. She may go to Washington yet. And you never know who may n't be in the White House," said Mr. Clymer. In his business way he knew the value of single associations, as well as of admittance, now and then, into a "ring." The ring, again, had not then become a permanent and all-engorging system of affairs.

Estabel grew in these days. In wisdom and in stature,

like the Divine Archetype of youth, she gained and adapted to herself, through a divine gift and ordering, that which was to make her being. In mind and body the elements of a grand womanhood were forming her toward their beautiful result. She did not know how she was changing. That was because it was not change, but a true evolution.

She was freed from so many petty chafes and cramps. She was not forced every day to feel or remember that she was ostracized. She met girls on the street who did not bow to her. To the Corinna Chilstones she was still the same "strange girl" — relegated the more to that position now that there was not even the slender claim of school fellowship — whom their mothers would not allow them to accost. But this did not chafe her in the least. They had their world; she had hers. She was as little solicitous about it as the bee, in her busy, happy ways, is solicitous about the ways of moth or wasp.

She had Mr. Satterwood; she had the Gladmother. She had then, after and along with these, her dear girl friends — Lilian, Margery, Mary Brithwaite, and the others of her earlier, tentative intimacy. She was loyal to them all. She rejoiced in every added one. But she added none, except as a crystal adds that which is essential to its own clear nature. Her accretions, like her growth, were homogeneous.

But it was Mr. Satterwood and the Gladmother in whose spirit and teaching the crystal was forming; in whose influences it was finding that which their solvent touch tested and proved akin.

Something seemed liberated to freer assertion and more frequent utterance in the master's daily instruction. The audience impels or restrains the speaker, in the moment of his self-giving; his best, his whole, only comes forth when it feels welcome and response. Mr. Satterwood had now among his pupils the predominance

of a different element from that which had prevailed when he began his work in Topthorpe under the auspices — limited and controlling — of the little, important “set” of Topthorpe matrons.

Not that he had been weakly controlled; he was simply compelled to a waiting reserve. He would gladly have led his scholars — as we are all being led by a Divine Wisdom — up through the intervening steps of a careful training, to a larger comprehension; inward, through a quickening of their inert natures, to a keener sympathy of intuition. But they would not take the first steps; they were hard with a premature and petty worldliness, against any penetration or energizing of a spiritual force.

Now he found it different. Estabel Charlock was not the only one to whom he could talk, when the impulse moved him to words of more than mere school drill or outside explanation; when some point in a lesson showed relation beyond mere circumstance or mechanical law, and touched the secret heart of reason, the very life of fact. History — natural science — above all, the religious exercise with which he began the day — stirred him often to an earnest comment or exposition; and he forgot the minutes and the book, in the joy of a grand seizure of the central thing, or a beautiful expansion and cheering application of a holy saying. He had a way of fixing his intense eyes upon some one person or object, as if in a hypnotic attraction, and unconsciously holding his point of vision as he held his inward sight, clear, strong, and unmoving, till the thought was wrought out, and the perception of his own soul had taken form for the perception of others. Very often he looked this way into Estabel Charlock’s eyes; and then she forgot also all but that which was as if some angel spoke it out of a heaven of truth. Other girls sometimes grew uneasy under his gaze, blushed, dropped their eyelids — this recalled, interrupted him.

Estabel never interrupted; she was out of herself; whether even in the body or out of the body, she neither knew nor reminded herself; she was caught up, and listened.

He talked one morning about those wonderful, strange words of the Christ, in which He told men, unqualifiedly, that all should be granted to every human soul's demand.

"'Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For he that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.'

"It is not conditional; and there is no exception," said the master. "It is a promise on demand. It is a pledge of *everything* to the want and claim. 'Everything is yours; ye are Christ's; Christ is God's.' The way is opened straight to the Divine Power and Will. The links are let down from above, and the chain is put into every human being's hand. If you want with your whole nature — if you ask with your whole faith that will not be denied — if you seek with your whole, unfaltering diligence — if you knock with all your strength — you shall have. you shall find, you shall be let in to your desire. *Whatever it is.*"

"Not if it is *wrong*?" Estabel Charlock put the question that she could not help.

Mr. Satterwood bent his eyes yet more keenly upon her. "Yes. That is the *law*. It is the glory of it and the awfulness. It rewards; it punishes. It is promise and terrible warning. Just before it is declared, the other words are put in record — they may have been said in that order or afterward, but they are in inseparable connection, — 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. 'Cast not your pearls' — your heavenly privilege and franchise — 'before the swine' of your lower nature; 'lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.'

"What does it all mean? It means that we may choose our way, and take it. That we may covet a thing, and get it. That we may desire our place and determine upon it, and gain it. Sooner or later, by more or less of toil and life-spending, through more or less of delay and disappointment, we may arrive at any aim whatsoever. There is no distinction. For blessing or bane, for salvation or damnation, we may be and may possess as we elect. It is sure to come. If not in this world, we must suppose in the next, or the next after—unless we change. For the declaration stands. God rewardeth every man according to his works. Judas went to his own place.

"You are at the choosing point. What will you choose? Place, position, influence, notice, admiration, money, beauty, luxury, the envy of the many? All these which are of the kingdom of the world, offer themselves to your asking and seeking and knocking—if *you will give your whole being* to the search and the demand and the determination; if you will fall down and worship the Satan that is in them. For it is the satan—the self—in them which requires condition; which makes bargain with you for your soul. And yet all these things, or any one of them, may come to you without self-seeking, as the will and gift of God. They may come to you *by the way*. Then they are righteous; they are fulfillment and command of God, sign and means for the work you are to do. 'Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. For your Father knoweth that ye have need of them.' 'Covet earnestly the best gifts.'"

Mr. Satterwood shut the book. A silence fell. In that silence he left the word that he had spoken, condensed and brief. Its amplification, its appliance, remained for the individual life. It was the seed of the sower.

It may easily have been that the fowls of the air and the thorns and the stones caught some of it as it fell, and turned it to uselessness or contrary use. They who had never reached up to the best may have taken countenance and comfort, even from the least, the mere earthly, that was in it. They may have grasped at the promise of such success as they most coveted, — the beauty, the riches, the luxury, the power, — thinking that *then* they would make the good use of them, do the good errand with them; forgetting that it is they, and not the righteousness, that are to be the *added* things; that separately, and first, they are the promise of the Evil. But surely some seed found way to good and open and honestly waiting ground.

Estabel went with it, at her earliest chance, to the Gladmother. As a child carries a flower, or a bright pebble, or some quite curious, unknown thing to its mother, she had come to carry her treasures of new thought, her half-solved mysteries of new knowledge, to the old, wise, young-with-angels'-youth woman. Until Estabel knew the Gladmother, she had had only aunts.

She and Lilian sat, literally and in spirit, at the feet of her who in body and in spirit had been hallowed by the heaven-touch; whose love kept her so close to them, and whose life was so near the infinite unveiling.

They asked her of these things; of how all these different possibilities could be; how the low and the high, even the false and the true, could be of one gift and promise. And about the terrible, ignorant choosing.

And she told them: "Live in the heart-world, little girls — in the inside of things — not in the vain show. Get behind the contradiction. 'In all these *things* is the *life of my spirit*.' We are to learn that. And to say, 'Direct, sanctify, and govern, *both our hearts and bodies*, in the ways of thy laws, and the works of thy commandments.' 'That loving thee above all *things*,'

—and yet *in* all things, — ‘we may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire.’ ‘That we may so pass through things temporal, as finally to lose not the things eternal.’ The eternal things are real — the reality of the signs. We shall lose nothing, we shall let go of nothing, except falsehood and wrong. ‘In that Christ *died*, he died unto *sin*, once; but in that he *liveth*, he *liveth unto God*.’ It’s all in the Gospel, children; it’s the good news; everything is God’s, and He gives everything to us.”

With words from the Word, with bits from the prayers of the ages, she went on to answer them as it was given her in that moment to speak. She spoke as if involuntarily; almost as within herself. That which she had lived by was present with her, to meet all question as it had met her own in all time of her own need.

She made them see in some degree how life was not meant to be an antagonism of conflicting elements, but in all things one. How the “Satan in things” is the self in them; the separating from, and losing of the very life in all; how the “first-seeking” of God’s rightness is the joining together and the filling full.

“‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,’” she said again. “Let God shine all through, from the heart to the outside, and be reflected back again. That is his glory and what makes us glad. ‘For it is God that worketh in us,’ — in the very littlest and commonest things, — ‘to will and to do according to his good pleasure.’ ‘It is the will of God concerning you.’ ‘For it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ How plain — and how dear — it is!”

She had to check herself; the words and meanings linked, reminded, crowded so. They were all so familiar to her that she feared she might forget the newness in them for the other, younger ones, and hurry too much upon them. She fell into a gentle silence, which

was less the end of speech than repose upon the abundant reserve from which speech flowed.

"Talk more, Gladmother, please," begged Lilian. "Tell us what it all says to you. We can see that it is there, when you repeat it and put it together like that. But we want it in small words. Cut the meat into bits for us. We are only little children, you know."

"That is just it," said the old lady. "*Be* little children. Live in little bits, and be content. Don't wish or worry for a big piece of anything. The big piece is the Lord's. Take the bread as He breaks it to you. Remember the bigness — and the multiplying — is all in His heart, and yours. Every crumb signifies the whole loaf. Don't crowd and struggle, among things or against other people. Come in, nearer, out of the scramble, close to the Giver, where there is plenty of room. Come out of the wilderness, into the home. And then be patient with the rest till they come in. Till they realize, I mean, that they *are* in. That the Lord's house is in the midst, and all around. It holds every one of them — every one of them is born into it — only they don't know. They are blundering around with shut eyes in the dark corners. Most of us are like babies, or blind kittens, for a while. But we are alive, and are going to grow, and to come to our sight. The Lord waits, from generation to generation."

"But we have only one generation to live in," said Estabel. "And it is perverse; it is confusing; our world is all mixed up. We can hardly tell which side we are, out or in."

"It shall all be *reconciled*," said Mrs. Trubin. "It was what Christ came for — to break down the wall of partition, and make both one, as they were from the beginning. When your two eyes see alike, they see one thing. Life was never meant to be divided into two. It is the seamless robe. Body and soul are *both* given, and shall always be. But the bodily is to be glorified.

It is to be changed in all its form and life, until it is like his who is able by his working to subdue all *things* unto Himself."

"Did you understand it all when you were young, Gladmother?" asked Lilian. "Did n't you just want *things* — separate things — then? Did n't you want to be beautiful? — but then you *were* beautiful. You did n't have to want that."

"I did want. I was n't beautiful. I think perhaps I should know better how to be, now. It takes a whole life — and more than this life — to grow to be ready for what God means, and as He means it. Some things only come when you have given them up. I think the Lord lets us stay in the outsides, sometimes, until we are tired, and get loose of them and can come in without dragging their chips and rubbish after us. It's the *Temple*, you see; He won't have the merchandise or the confusion in it. But by and by the Temple is to be everywhere, and everything is to be holy, and living is to be worship."

The two girls looked up into her eyes silently, as if they might read there the vision that she saw. The Gladmother's eyes were lifted up, they could not follow whither.

Softly, again, the words of Holy Scripture fell from her lips as if their letters became luminous before her in the spirit.

" 'It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, — there shall they be called the children of the living God.' 'On the very bells of the horses it is to be written, Holiness unto the Lord.' 'In every place incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering; for my Name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Because that *is* his very Name, signed and declared everywhere. He *is* the Lord of Hosts, and the hosts shall be all his. The hosts of things, and the

hosts of souls, *together*; when souls see things as He makes them for souls to see. When they find his thoughts in them, and are glad in them with his gladness and because of his word. '*Unite* my heart,'—make one life for it from the outside and the in—'to fear thy name.' 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.' And to fear is not to be afraid, but to see and own with a sweet, awful joy. This is the life that is to come. When we believe so, how can we be restless with ourselves, or despise anybody else? The difference is just that some don't know, and some only know a little. But 'all shall know, from the least unto the greatest.' "

The Gladmother leaned back among her cushions. She had talked enough.

A purple glory shot in a parted ray from her intercepting crystals, threading through among her ferns, and came across upon the wall behind her overhead.

The two girls looked up, and saw it there, but the Gladmother did not know.

It was as if some angel hand had brought a coal from off the altar, and lighted up a fair, attesting sign.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ASTIGMATISM: AND WINDMILLS.

It was not a blithesome winter to Mrs. Clymer. The Pequant episode, which to a woman of stronger social command would have been a passing annoyance, an incident of girlish enthusiasm and extravagance excusable for motive and because of an inexperience soon to be outgrown, was a chafing mortification, a pursuing discredit. She remembered it all the time; she thought nobody else ever forgot it. It did keep coming round to her in distorted, aggravated versions.

Estabel had taken up some fancied affront, and slapped society in the face. She had rushed into the middle of a dance; had stopped the music, broken up the evening; shrieked out something denouncing the whole company. It was a most extraordinary performance; perfectly theatrical. Whatever the original matter was, she had made it worse; a family chiefly concerned had left the next day; the Clymers had hardly been spoken to afterward, and had returned to Topthorpe suddenly a little later. It was a great pity; how the poor people must feel! And the girl, of course, had thrown herself hopelessly out of everything.

More or less of this, civilly covered and restrained, was brought to Mrs. Clymer in remark and question. What was not literally repeated she could imagine. She met all mention with a commendable presence of mind that lasted just long enough for the instant need, and reserved each time an added sting for the bad quarter hours that were counting up into days and weeks.

"Oh, it was not at all like that," she would say easily and smilingly; "the dance was at an end. The poor little overdressed stranger got bewildered — she *had* made rather a goose of herself, and the young people had been amused. Estabel misunderstood and was very indignant; she did speak out a word or two to the ruder ones, and marched the silly little thing off under her own small wing. It was really funny; but the best feeling of the company was with her; the nicest people even praised her. She had been quite a favorite all through the season; and I don't think she lost anything."

Mrs. Clymer assumed rather cleverly; but she assumed what might have been more readily granted if she had waited for the granting. She would better have left the nice people to their own voluntary leniency. They smiled a little when they heard her rendering of the affair. Mrs. Clymer felt the smile telepathically in her own honestly miserable distance, when she had fired her plucky shot and retreated within her lines.

Besides, or no little in consequence, she was not well. She had taken an influenza in the early weeks of winter, and it had followed her on and kept her wretched till after the New Year. She said she was tired of everything. She wished she could get away, out of the cold. She wished she could go to Europe. She wished she need not have any worry or responsibility. That meant that the responsibility she had chosen to take up had proved too much for her.

"Why *don't* you go to Europe, Aunt Vera?" Estabel had asked her.

"You're one reason," Mrs. Clymer had replied shortly. And then she had repented of the unkindness, and added, "I had always thought I should take you some time, perhaps, after you had finished school. I don't know now. Things in general don't seem to agree with you."

Estabel's generous feeling came up into her face in flushing color and shine of stoutly repressed tears.

"I am very happy in all but not pleasing you, Aunt Vera." Her voice shook a little, but it was with the low, strong tremolo of a contained emotion.

"Why don't you please me, then?" Mrs. Clymer answered pettishly. "But I suppose it's too late now."

Then Estabel walked away to a window, and stood there, hiding what would not let her speak again. There was a spasm in her throat, a quiver of her proud, vainly struggling lip, and the full drops that swelled hot within her eyelids brimmed over.

When she turned round her aunt had left the room, and Ulick North stood in the farther doorway.

Her telltale handkerchief was crumpled in her hand; her brow and eyes were red with the restraint that shows heavier trace than easy weeping.

Ulick saw that there was trouble; Estabel knew that he could but see. She came straight toward him.

"It is one of my old bothers," she said. "Don't mind." And she gave him her hand.

Ordinarily she avoided this action; for Dr. North had a way of taking but a cool, sliding hold, out of which the offered friendliness had to drop. Estabel wondered if he did so with everybody, or only with her. It was evident, at least, that even in a common hand-shake Ulick North would put no personal demonstration.

She recollected herself upon the instant, and did not let her own fingers close; so that it happened that Dr. North found himself for a second's space slightly retaining what would not stay with him. He smiled as they both sat down.

"What is the matter with Aunt Vera and me?" she questioned him abruptly, as if the interrogation would not more naturally, under the circumstances, have come from him. She did not refer to passing circumstance.

however, but to normal state. And Dr. North did not treat symptoms, but the ail behind the symptoms.

"Astigmatism," he said.

"I suppose that tells me — if I understood," said Estabel.

"Eyes don't focus alike. Objects appear in strained relations. Possibly a difference in line of axis, also. That complicates still more. One sees up and the other down."

He was doubtless trying to divert the immediate pressure of her feeling by starting a mental counteraction.

"Which is right? I don't mean she or I — but which way of looking?"

"Ah?" There was both ejaculation and interrogation in the syllable. "Who shall determine? Every man is right in his own eyes — and every eye in its own fashion."

"Especially every woman — and each of every woman's eyes?"

Then they both laughed. Ulick had got her just where he wanted her to be.

"She wants to go to Europe, and she says I'm the reason she can't go."

"Oh, no; not the only reason."

"No. She said 'one reason.'"

"Another is West Gardens; and another, Western shares. Houses going up, and some stocks threatening to go down. It would be the best thing for her. I'll advise it as soon as I see there would be any practical use. Europe cures a good many things that can't get well on this side. And it's a great relief to doctors."

"Then you don't think I hinder by staying here? There's always my other aunt and Stillwick, you know."

"I don't think you hinder anything, except, perhaps, yourself. And I'm not sure about that. Haven't you been trying a little bout with a windmill?" And

Dr. North laughed slightly, glancing sidewise at Estabel out of his shrewd eyes, as he sat, leaning forward with his arms along his knees, twisting a bit of paper he had picked up into certain odd shapes.

"Well. The windmill stopped whirling — for a minute, anyway."

"How do you pronounce Q-u-i-x-o-t-e?" Dr. North spelled the name of Cervantes's doughty knight as if he did not know what to do with the letters.

"I don't. I suppose you mean, how would it be proper to pronounce it. The proper way is the reason I don't pronounce it at all. It is the reason I don't do several other things."

"Exactly. That is sufficiently pronounced. Well, would n't the natural derivation from the word in the proper way be something like 'chaotic'?"

"Would n't you try to stop a windmill if you saw it knocking other people down?" Estabel answered from the root of the matter, leaving the derivable consequence to take care of itself.

"With my bare hands, and get my arms broken? I don't know. I believe *you* would. Perhaps I should only sit still and smoke."

"And sneer at windmills."

"Not necessarily. Let them grind their own corn. The sneering is for the simple folk who think it fine to get within sweep of their sails."

"It's a bad thing to get into the way of putting everything down with a scoff, and then thinking that it is down."

"Very sententious, Estabel. And you have chosen the right word now. To 'scoff' is only to shove, anyhow."

Estabel looked up at him shyly, a lovely glow in her face. Was it because he felt friendly enough — enough in touch with her — to call her by her name, or because of the honest frankness with which he threw aside irony to acknowledge the right?

She met a look; it was only a look. But spirits flash upon each other so, when a word is slow or guards itself. Somehow she felt herself inside a barrier—as if the truth in her had found the truth in him, and claimed it.

It was a great thing, as Sara Sullivant had said, to be tolerated—to be “put up with”—by Ulick North. To find a little value, a little approval, in his eyes; to have them lighten upon her with an instant’s understanding and assent; to have her name escape him as if he held her in his thoughts apart from prejudice; as if she had become individual to him, excepted from the common human nature that he so often derided; that was—what was it? Triumph? Whether she knew it or not, it was something a great deal sweeter than triumph.

Was Dr. North’s little surrender in their casual tilt of words as sweet to him?

In the moment’s silence between them which followed, Aunt Vera stepped inside the room upon the deep, soft velvet of her Aubusson carpet, without their notice.

The woman caught the woman’s dawning look in the young girl’s face.

And Ulick North, leaning toward her, his fingers playing with a bit of paper, his eyes upon the gentle bend of her sensitive lips, upon the delicately mantling flush that was giving her again one of her moments of beauty—upon the downcast eyelids that had made haste to shut away the involuntary flash—what did he mean?

“*That* will not do,” Mrs. Clymer said to herself, as she stepped back, soundlessly, to make her entry again from behind them, and with more careful demonstration. “And the *other thing* will never come about in Topthorpe. It is time to break camp—if it could be done.”

The doorbell rang. Mrs. Clymer spoke to Archibald as he came through from his pantry habitat to answer it. Then she advanced into the room, where she found Ulick now standing with his hat in his hand.

"Going?" she asked cheerfully. "I did not know you were here. Won't you stay and dine?"

Dr. North could not stay. He had some patients to see. And he went out through the hall, where Archibald reopened the door for him which he had just closed upon a declined visitor.

Aunt Vera turned round to Estabel. That young woman stood where she had risen when Dr. North had taken leave. She had just had time, since he had turned away, to stoop and pick up the twisted bit of paper that he had let fall. Aunt Vera was particular as to any little litter upon her floors or furniture.

"Why did n't you send for me to see Dr. North?" Mrs. Clymer asked her. "Don't you know that it is n't quite young-ladylike to appropriate a gentleman's visit to yourself?"

Estabel colored with a different flush from that which had but just softly subsided. Suddenly she felt ashamed. The twisted paper seemed to develop some latent heat between her fingers. It arraigned her of a motive. She perceived in herself the pleasure of its reminder of the look and tone that had accompanied its handling. Folded up in it was a secret that she would not consciously have searched into, that she would not deliberately have been glad of, but that made her world a little brighter for its being there, and that she instinctively held fast. She was only a little school-girl, and Dr. North was a wise, strong, keen-judging man. He criticised her, and made her half indignant, half afraid. Yet there had been that one instant of an equal understanding, a sympathetic recognition, a giving way, even, before her simple word; and it had made her happy. Dr. North's whole visit to-day had

been so kindly, so comforting, that it had indeed put Aunt Vera comfortably, and altogether, out of her head.

Now Aunt Vera stood there, calling her to account; and more sharply, even, than she knew.

"He did not ask—I did not think—he always drops in just as it happens," she stammered.

"You will please think the next time. Visitors to my house usually expect to see me. At least, it is proper they should. And *don't imagine*" — she emphasized the words slowly, ominously, looking severely into Estabel's blushing face, and pausing, as if there were something that, after all, could not easily be spoken.

"Aunt Vera! Hush!" cried Estabel, and flew away with the cry, like a frightened bird.

Mrs. Clymer picked up the paper that had again been dropped. The inanimate thing had got some strong electric charging in its successive manipulations, by the time Aunt Vera tossed it into the grate.

If inanimate things could only deliver up their storage, the world would be alight and alive with lightning revelations.

"That will do for this time," was the lady's complacent reflection. "Perhaps it will last till something better can be done. The rest of the winter will have to be worried through, I suppose. But this must stop, right here. It *might* have answered—but it won't. Two such impracticables! Two bees in the family bonnet! We might as well all go into a lunatic asylum together."

Aunt Vera laughed—and coughed. The heat of annoyance had died out of her face, and left her pale. She went and sat down close to the fire, threw the paper wisp upon the coals, and laid her head back against the cushion of her chair. Certainly she was not well, and things were hard upon her.

She sat, considering, perplexedly. Mrs. Clymer was

not great in generalship. She made no skillful, patient parallels of approach. She massed her forces, and marched right up against whatever defense of position. Once repulsed, the campaign was over. She retreated across country.

She would like to take back now all that she had done. She wished she had sent Estabel away to boarding-school, and brought her back to Tophthorpe, finished. And yet she knew that Tophthorpe would hardly allow anything to be finished that was not finished there; or any social beginning to be readily made except the beginning of being born in Tophthorpe.

She had vaguely planned to take her niece, some time, to Europe. Unless, indeed, developments at home should set this happily aside and make it needless. She began to think she had been a goose to take her from Aunt Esther and Cousin Lucy, and the quiet ways and places that they were all used to together, and where things might happen naturally. Estabel had been the only young girl there, to be accounted of; she had the strong advantage of local comparison. Some flowers grow best and show best in their own woods. The most likely chance for that "other thing" would be back in Stillwick, after all.

Next winter Estabel would be eighteen. She would have had school enough. She would go back with an added superiority to her surroundings. She would be more companionable than ever to Miss Henslee, more in requisition than ever at the Place. Old Colonel Henslee was failing fast. Of course, that would be the wisest way. And she and Mr. Clymer would go abroad. She would shake the dust of Tophthorpe off her feet and put the Atlantic between herself and her discomfitures. After things had all come round, they could return serenely, with more pictures, more silks and jewels, more rugs and tapestries, more old relics from the palaces that had emptied themselves into the junk shops, and

make fresh landing, with a flood tide, at higher water-mark.

Aunt Vera, reaching this brilliant conclusion, felt a good deal better.

She was glad she had asked Ulick to stay to dinner. It would not do to let him suspect her suspicions. He was a cross grain. It would work just the wrong way. Estabel was a cross-grain; but she was the feminine of it. With a woman, in such things, the cross working is against the grain of her own consciousness. She had made Estabel conscious. Mrs. Clymer felt all this without reasoning it. She was not a reasoning person; but she arrived at conclusions in the facile way of natures that do not trouble themselves with going deep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BÉZIQUE.

AUNT VERA looked with satisfaction upon the results she had now compassed. Estabel kept carefully away from Dr. North, who came to the house much as usual. He never happened now to find her alone. She seemed to have a special ear for his ring, a special sense of his coming. She was out one way as he came in the other, and hastened scrupulously to announce his presence to Aunt Vera. If Aunt Vera were out, she could not be found herself.

Harry Henslee came too, in the old, easy way. Estabel laughed and talked with him, listened to his bright commonplace, which she met as brightly, was pleased when he told her of his plans.

She would not go to any young parties this winter.

Sometimes, of course, Dr. North and Harry would be at the house together. Estabel would then seem to be alive only on the child side of her. A conundrum or a puzzle, a game of checkers or *bélique*, would occupy her with the boy, while the man looked on and thought he understood, being really miles away from understanding at all.

Mrs. Clymer knitted up her magic balls or practised her new crochet, counting stitches and measuring lengths, or winding wools which she made Ulick hold for her.

In those days Ulick's calls were short.

"Oh, *is n't* that too bad?" Estabel cried one evening, as a hand at *bélique* came to an end. "A double

just ready to declare, and could n't take the last trick!"

"There's a good deal of *bézique* in human life," remarked Mr. Clymer with complacency at his own perspicacity.

Dr. North had just come in.

"People don't play the right cards in time. Isn't it so, Ulick?"

"Or the right cards don't come in time," replied the young doctor. "We have to take what turns up for us, and wait all through the game, perhaps, before it does turn up."

"You see," said Estabel, "one is so apt to hold on to the wrong thing. If I had n't tried for aces, I might have made kings, and then I lost both, and the lead, and could do nothing with my double when it came."

"Moral: don't try for too much, and you may get something," returned Ulick carelessly.

"Would you be satisfied with that?" demanded Estabel, forgetting reserve and unheeding personality in eagerness for the abstract conclusion. "I'd rather try for the highest, if I only got it — as I did now — with my last breath."

"Depends upon what is agreed on for the highest," Ulick answered, coolly. "I believe in *bézique* it is counted very much as elsewhere. The tens and the aces and the people that are all of a sort. And the matches between queens and jacks — if they are only jacks of diamonds."

"The world in a pack of cards," said Mr. Clymer.

"Everything is a microcosm, if you take a sharp look at it," returned the doctor. "Been out to-day?" He had taken a seat beside his uncle.

Estabel shuffled her cards together and began to deal again, moving slightly in her chair, so that the elder group and the light of the chandelier were behind her.

Mr. Clymer had rheumatism. He had lately been laid up with a sharp attack. His nephew, in whose professional ability he had strong confidence, had been in attendance. Apart from the value of his services, it was as well, also, to keep professional profit within the family. It was one way by which Uncle Abel could feel that he was comfortably discharging his family obligations.

"Down-town for an hour at 'change time. Heard the news?"

"Probably not. I don't get the news on 'change."

"Chilstone and Marish's notes went to protest."

Mrs. Clymer threw herself upright in her chair, as if she had been galvanized. She dropped three stitches from her knitting needle, her ball of worsted rolled down upon the carpet, and her eyeglasses slipped off her nose.

"*Failed?*" she ejaculated.

"That's what it's commonly called," returned her husband quite composedly.

"You don't mean so? Why didn't you tell of it before? What *will* they do?"

"Just what other men do. Settle up the best way they can, and go on again."

"But *they* — the *family*? How will they live?" Mrs. Clymer seemed almost in a hurry to hear that they would not be able to live at all. Somehow, the more there are killed and wounded, the more interesting — as news — a disaster appears to be.

Mr. Clymer laughed. "As they always have lived, probably. You won't get rid of them out of Mount Street, Perseverance."

Once in a great while Mr. Clymer called his wife by her whole, obsolete Christian name; perhaps because she so carefully avoided calling him "Abel."

Estabel and Harry both looked round, turning toward the speakers. Dr. North picked up Mrs. Clymer's ball

and laid it on her lap, whence she immediately let it roll again.

"But I thought when people *failed*, everything had to go."

"Oh, not at all. A house may take fire, and yet not burn down to the ground."

"When that happens the small boy is ill-used," remarked Dr. North. "And perhaps some of the bigger lookers-on. Human nature demands the utmost of an event." His mouth wore its curve of amused irony.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, Ulick," said his aunt-in-law. "I don't *wish* anybody misfortune, but I should *think* they would *have* to be poor."

"Mrs. Chilstone has n't failed," explained Uncle Abel. "That's well taken care of. Chilstone's a man who always knows what he is about. A wife is a good insurance policy."

Estabel had laid down her cards, and now turned square about. No one spoke immediately, and she ventured to ask a question.

"What does that mean, Uncle Clymer?"

"It means that a wife is a man's preferred creditor. She has the best right."

"What is a preferred creditor?"

"One who has security of being paid first."

"Whatever becomes of the rest," supplemented Dr. North quietly, reaching over to take up Estabel's dial-counter, and presently proceeding to move its indexes back and forth mechanically, to the entire derangement of her score.

Estabel did not notice. "Is that right?" she pursued. "I thought wives were their husband's partners. I should think the debts would be theirs, too."

Mr. Clymer lifted his head with a challenged air. There was a very positive tone in his voice as he replied:

"Liabilities depend on partnership agreements.

'With all my worldly goods I thee endow' is the man's contract. His first duty is to his wife."

"But if his wife was endowed with what he owed" —

"She is n't. He gives her what he has. What he may owe afterward has nothing to do with it. It is his business to see that it shall not have. A man is bound to take care of his wife," he repeated.

"Only I thought you said it was insurance," persisted Estabel in all simplicity. She never thought that her uncle was justifying himself. She supposed it was Mr. Chilstone, and a general principle. The general principles of the world interested Estabel Charlock very much.

"Is n't insurance a plan to get back something that will make up a loss?"

Dr. North laughed. He put down the bézique counter and glanced up. The little indexes on the two dials showed a round reckoning of two thousand. Harry Henslee turned them back to their places in the count, which he remembered.

"You don't know anything about it. Stick to your game," Mr. Clymer said testily. He replied more to Ulick North's look and smile than to the girl's words.

Estabel resumed her hand.

"I would n't be anybody's wife that would make an insurance policy of me," she remarked with an honest serenity, spreading out the bits of pasteboard in her fingers. "I declare a royal marriage, Harry;" and laid down the pair.

"I should think you did, beforehand!" shouted Harry with great glee. "Only remember, you must get your king of trumps first. You may have to wait a good while for him."

"Well, I did wait. I had a common marriage in my hand, too. But I had to break that up to take the trick."

"Oh, you jilt! Do you know half how funny you are, Estabel?" And Harry's shout broke forth again.

"Can't you play without such a noise?" demanded Mr. Clymer, who had wheeled round in his chair toward the fire, broken up a big lump of cannel coal with a vigorous thump, and betaken himself again to the broad sheet of his "Journal of Commerce."

"Anyway," soliloquized Mrs. Clymer with reassurance, "they can't look over everybody's heads any longer." And her knitting needles began their easy click again, as she settled herself back in her cushions to think over the bit of news so briefly told and explained, and paraphrase it to her full inward satisfaction.

Dr. North watched the *bélique* players a few moments, as a rapid count on Estabel's part went on, until she made a triumphant final score with sequence of trumps.

Then he and Harry went away together. They were very good friends.

"The talk got rather ticklish to-night," said the younger fellow, buttoning up his overcoat closer as the cold blast through Mount Street struck them.

Dr. North walked up the length of a block with Harry before he turned across toward Clover Street.

"I'd have liked to hear it out a little longer," the latter went on. "Only Estabel would have gotten further into the hot water — or put somebody else in. She was either mighty deep or mighty simple."

"Both, I think," returned the doctor. "Simpleness — of a kind — goes deep."

"She was plucky, anyhow — as usual."

Dr. North did not reply to that. He was thinking that a young man might not speak just so of a girl he was in love with. It further crossed his mind that the little play of metaphor over the cards would not have gone on between two who had any sensitive mutual consciousness. Notwithstanding that he felt himself as decidedly outside as ever, — more left aside than ever,

indeed, of late, — these indications were not unwelcome to him. As to the *béziq*ue, it had seemed to him that Estabel had been very charmingly literal; and in that very literalness had, without smallest intention, disclosed a larger truth of herself that might well be prophecy. He distinctly hoped it might be.

What did not occur to him with equal force was that he, who had thought he distrusted the whole world, was beginning to believe almost absolutely in this little schoolgirl; and that something which unbelief had been hindering in his life was, with a new faith, stirring toward some fresh, if remote possibility. He either did not suspect it in himself, or he turned willfully from self-detection. If the discovery had closely threatened him, he would have put it aside with that theoretical substitution of motive by which he was wont to refer to the love of mere analytical research any interest in individual human character.

"She is a schoolgirl," he would have said. "She is not a woman, in the world. One wonders if she will be that soon. Will the world creep upon her, as the years must?"

It seemed to him as if there had been a long pause, when Harry Henslee said again, or really only went on to say, "It is because she means things. She's downright honest, through and through. I've known her all my life."

With that they came to the corner. As they said good-night, Dr. North, the undemonstrative, held out his hand. Harry took it, and got a good, strong grip. And then they went their ways.

To the little argument as to relations and events already working in Ulick North's sub-consciousness, something in his companion's last word had added a further subtle touch of confirmation — not assurance, not conviction; why should he care for either? There was time, of course, for anything to come of this frank inti-

macy; yet somehow it was comfortable to Dr. North that it had not yet come, in young, hasty fashion.

Over his pipe that night he wondered if knowing a person all one's life might give one, after all, the most discriminative knowledge; if, indeed, it might not possibly be a mere childish apprehension of each other that persons so knowing would carry on into their maturer life; if later friendships might not reach farther down, strike deeper root.

Then he did, at last, rousing himself, begin to wonder at his own wonder. Of what interest was all this to him? Why did he care to understand what sort of understanding Harry Henslee might have of Estabel Charlock, the girl whom he had known all his life? Why did he care to guess what this girl would do, or be, or come to, next, in the years that hurry a girl forward so fast into a woman? What would it ever be to him whether the world got her, or she got loose from the world?

Still, in this introspection, he did not more than half discover himself, even to the consciousness that it was really his own case he was watching, on the careful, passive, "expectant" system. He thought that he was dismissing the matter.

He made the discovery that his pipe was finished, shook the ashes out with a particular deliberation, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RELIGION OF BUSINESS.

MR. CLYMER had a real respect for his nephew. Cranky as the latter's opinions often seemed to him to be, he could not quite shake off the effect they had upon him. Perhaps when they were not expressed, the influence of their withholding was the stronger. He knew very well that there could be very few things concerning which Ulick North had not opinions; and he felt that silence was sometimes the keenest criticism.

Mr. Clymer was very apt to try himself on with Ulick. The result of this was very apt to be an increased complication in his peculiarly mixed regard for the young man. Arguing with him was often like arguing with his own better self; and while a man respects the best of himself and cannot be comfortable until he wins it over, he may be impatient enough with it at times to wish that he could order it out of his house. There was therefore danger, when this better self was represented objectively, that a crisis of such nature might, to greater or less extent, arise. Mr. Clymer did not wish to quarrel with his nephew, but it frequently happened that their relations of the moment were slightly strained.

The only part that Dr. North had taken in the little colloquy of the other evening — except for his amused allusion to the small boy's appetite for fire, and his brief, significant commentary upon the definition of the preferred creditor — had been to listen and laugh. But while his eyes had been brimful of fun at the encounter

of shrewd worldly wisdom with young, honest, quick-witted ignorance, they had held a certain keen searchingness, as of a judge who watches from the bench a cross-examination. Mr. Clymer wondered what his rulings would have been.

So when Ulick found him alone a few evenings later, the subject was revived.

"That matter of Chilstone and Marish turns out pretty disastrously," Mr. Clymer remarked. "Liabilities very large, and scattered; assets next to nothing, practically. It means a good deal of trouble. When sand and pebbles begin rolling down-hill, look out for a landslide. If there is n't a considerable business cave-in coming, I'm happily mistaken."

"I hope it does n't touch you, sir," said Dr. North guardedly.

"Not directly. No. We don't hold any of Chilstone and Marish's paper. I've been shy of it for some time. Steeples, my partner, has rather a weakness for name sometimes — West End name, that is. But I don't recognize any West End in business quarters. So we're pretty cautious, and quick, too, in shaky times. Does n't do to stand too long on a hummock when you're crossing a bog. Jump at the right minute — that's the rule. Turns out the *golden* rule in our line of march. Shaky times are good enough times, if you know how to take 'em."

Mr. Clymer smiled at himself in astute content.

Dr. North sat gravely listening.

Some one else heard the talk, too, in fragments; not surreptitiously, for Mr. Clymer knew that Estabel had taken her school books and retreated to the dining-room when Dr. North came in, and that the doors were open across the narrow passage. Besides, this kind of talk went on so very commonly; there was no reserve or secret in it. It did not even begin to interest her at once. She was deep in an algebraic equation.

"*Business* assets, as I said, next to nothing in the case. Big failures in New York did the mischief. Lots of waste paper."

"Seems to be a kind of waste paper affair all round," said the doctor. But he would not enlarge, nor precipitate discussion.

Mr. Clymer's smile broke into a laugh. "That states it, exactly," he said. "And nobody much hurt in the end, perhaps."

"Except, I suppose, a few practical people, who don't do a paper business, but who have to come down with the slide. Under it, I guess, when it settles."

It was here that Estabel began really to listen. Here was something that concerned life directly, as her particular example in algebra did not.

"Poor devils, yes. Unless they've known enough to hedge a bit. It's hard on them, but can't be helped. The slide, as you say, has got to lodge somewhere."

"I didn't say it exactly so. But it's the result, if not the necessity. It appears to be the religion of business." Dr. North spoke composedly, but his eyes flashed. Estabel knew they would. She wished she could see his face.

"If you like to call it so, although I don't see the connection. If you mean the inevitable law, why not?"

"No why. It has always been the inevitable law in the business of religion. And it's a poor rule that won't work both ways." Dr. North's cynical tones enunciated the statement most succinctly.

"What do you mean by *that*?" came with irate quickness from Mr. Clymer.

"I mean what the churches have been teaching for three hundred years — the doctrine of human failure, and of turning off the loss on some one else, and walking away free."

This was attacking Mr. Abel Clymer on both flanks.

He was a firm upholder of the church, and said his prayers every Sunday at the Chapel of the Beatitudes; a Low Church compromise between the Puritan orthodoxy in which he had been brought up and the ritualistic order of observance which Mrs. Clymer preferred, perhaps as a convenient ready-made garment involving less trouble of personal fitting. Immaculate in holiday appointment, from shaven chin to shining boots, from tip to tip an unimpeachable Christian gentleman, he filled his place in his broad-aisle pew as he did his chair in his counting house on other days, with an importance and a dignity; and as duly transferred from his vest pocket to the offertory plate a golden coin in payment of tax to the revenue of the Kingdom, as he passed his worldly gains to the right entry in his business ledgers, and with much the same motive in careful calculation; to look out for himself in a shaky world, and to cross the bog on safe hummocks.

He was as confident of his position and principle in the one relation as in the other. Both were sacred to him; fixed, and set apart, and not to be doubted or profaned. The unexpected assault astounded him.

"If you scoff at Christ's salvation!" he broke out, and could no further.

"I don't. Any more than I should scoff at you, if you came forward now to some poor fellow under the drift with *help to right himself*. I can understand the gospel, so far; but I cannot understand the thing that has been made of it, any more than I can understand the technical turns and squirms of debit and credit."

This brought it back. Mr. Clymer had no mind to pursue a theological disputation; he was not in armor nor in mood for it. It was a week-day with him, and this was week-day talk. But the acrimony of a religious resentment intensified his practical dogmatism, and he was sore with personal offense. He had not set out for all this, but he was in for it now. He might

as well understand things, once for all, with Ulick North.

"What technical squirms?" he demanded. "A man in honorable business does n't like insinuations of squirms."

"It is n't a pretty word; but you spoke of 'hedging.'"

"Looking out both ways; yes. That's fair in all tactics. One must provide for retreat, as well as for advance. I suppose you mean something like what was spoken of the other night. I don't imagine you are as uncomprehending as that child."

That child was leaning forward now, and listening with all her might — not to hear of herself; that passed her as of no concern; but to hear what Ulick North would say of truth and falsehood in these things of which she was so uncomprehending.

"I don't see any way of getting round a debt but by paying it, if that is uncomprehending," she heard Dr. North reply.

"Well, that's gospel. That's Calvinism. And you don't like Calvinism."

"It strikes me that's another side of the subject, and that there may be a question between gospel and Calvinism. But allowing that theory, it only clinches the argument. *Somebody must pay*. A debt is a debt, and must either be discharged, or absolutely forgiven by the party holding claim."

"Well. Which thing are you talking about?"

"Both, so far. My gospel — if I were sure of it — would be absolute forgiveness. In spiritual matters I should take the word to mean its whole meaning — something more than flat canceling; a *giving-for* the payment. A free bestowal of the wherewithal to redeem the debt. But I am no polemic. I think a worldly obligation — an honest one — holds, clear through. A man's money can't be shuffled out of

sight, or transferred, and really cease to be liable. The transfer would be only a shifting of responsibility."

"Then I could n't give away anything as I went along without involving the person receiving it to that extent, if I failed ever after to take up a business note. Trash!"

"You can make trash out of anything. There is nothing true that cannot be pushed to a form of absurdity. The whole thing lies in a clear, upright consciousness. I would n't expect a woman whom I could 'honor' — that's in the marriage contract, too, or ought to be on both sides — to keep possession of anything that I should slip into her pocket because I was n't sure it might rightfully belong in mine."

"I don't see where you would stop, with your high morals." Mr. Clymer's voice rose, irritatedly, a tone or two in spite of an habitual control. "A debt is a duty, and a duty is a due. Perhaps you would have a wife — or a widow — or an inheritor — hunt up all they might think a man *ought* to have done with his money, and pay it out for him in settlement of his estate, before accepting their own rights — a dower, or a legacy, or a residue at law?"

Mr. Clymer thought he had shown an absurdity yet more far reaching and conclusive, to which such notions as Ulick North's might logically lead. Perhaps he thought he was bringing the argument home, in some remote, suggested contingency, to the man.

"One would n't like to have the burden laid upon him of proof-reading the whole record of a man's life," Ulick replied, in a tone indicative of the sort of smile that might accompany a courteously ambiguous answer, as of one who would turn off a troublesome subject as little offensively as possible. There was also a movement as if he rose to go.

Mr. Clymer got up too. Estabel heard his heavy chair pushed back. But he would not let Ulick off

without another thrust. It seemed as if he meant to drive him to the wall.

"Perhaps you would n't be in favor of his having any property to leave," he said sardonically.

"Perhaps," Ulick returned quietly, "there would n't be so much property amassed, or so many consciences involved, or so many contrasts in human condition, if every man held a duty as a debt, from day to day, and from dollar to dollar."

"I'm glad to know your opinions," Mr. Clymer answered, with a strongly constrained utterance which Estabel knew to be her uncle's when he was very angry. "They are not mine. They are the notions of a set of communist fanatics. But I shall not quarrel with you. I don't quarrel. I modify my estimates, however — and consequently, sometimes, my course of action. Good-night."

And he sat down again, wheeling about evidently, from the sound of creaking casters, so as to turn his back upon the door through which Dr. North was departing.

"Perhaps I did wrong," Estabel was saying to herself. "But I could n't help it, very well. And — oh! was n't he brave?"

She might have slipped away then, through the farther door and passage, and left no trace of her having been within hearing. But with a bravery of her own she sat still. What she had done she would not conceal.

The algebraic equation, however; would not work itself through her brain. And presently she heard her uncle go off to his room, up the front staircase, speaking to Archibald as he went, and ordering him, curtly, to chain-bolt the door and put out the lights. He had forgotten to come into the dining-room for his usual glass of water.

A bell rang from above a minute after, and Archibald appeared to fetch it.

"Good-night, Archibald," the girl said, meeting him in the doorway with a pile of books upon her arm. There was such a bright, sweet, happy ring in her voice that the man's "Good-night, miss," took a responsive cheeriness, and he added to himself, as he filled a little pitcher from the great ice-urn, "'T ain't *her*, then. *She* ain't in it. So fur, so good; but the old man's riled at something, no mistake."

When Archibald was on duty he was very often on phraseological stilts; in his private cogitations he dropped to an easy, natural level. One may be a very fair French or German or Latin scholar, and yet not have arrived at thinking in French, German, or Latin.

When Ulick North returned to his office after his morning round next day, he found upon his table a square blue envelope. Within was a note of telegraphic brevity, and a bank check. The note said: —

"Please find enclosed check for one hundred dollars, for professional services, and return receipt for the same.
Yours truly, ABEL CLYMER."

This was dismissal, and, as Ulick North felt it, insult. Professionally, he had visited his uncle a dozen times or more during his recent disability.

Within the hour an answer reached Mr. Clymer's office.

"Please find enclosed my bill for medical attendance, with check returned, as drawn under evident mistake.
Yours truly, ULICK NORTH."

The bill was for fifteen visits, thirty dollars.

Ulick had taken his new attitude in the circumstances as positively and unhesitatingly as Mr. Clymer had attempted to take his.

The specific charge was paid with a fresh check, the receipted bill sent back in due order, each with instant promptness, and no further word was exchanged. The formality was as final as the demanding and receiving of passports by an ambassador of state.

Heretofore there had been no bill rendering, no receipts; the services had been given uncalculatingly, the occasional money acknowledgment offered and received with friendly generosity and frankness, as from kinsman to kinsman, each understanding and appreciating a goodwill apart from pay. This sudden assumption of business relations meant abandonment, at least for the time, of any other.

Ulick North felt the Mount Street door closed against him, and the next time Mr. Clymer wanted advice he sent for Dr. Keaton.

Nevertheless, in the midst of his resentment, he felt an involuntary added respect for the young man, with whose pride if not his principles he could sympathize. The sting was that this increase of estimation had to be precisely the deduction from his own self-respect.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SEEING THROUGH.

It is curiously remarkable how minor events swell the current of reason and determination when a strong wish first impels it. Every little wind blows the same way. There is an easy trend, by repeated slight inclines in the lay of the land, toward the object. All streams run to the sea, as all roads lead toward Rome.

Mrs. Clymer wanted to break up her establishment in Mount Street and go again to Europe. Her establishment began to break up of its own accord.

First, Sara Sullivant was sent for from Mullichunk, in a remote district of Maine. An aunt had lately died there, leaving a paralytic husband. Sara was wanted to come and take the charge that nobody else seemed free to take.

"I expected it. It's never long between," she said.

"Between what?" asked her mistress.

"Between the seeings through."

"I don't understand."

"There's always somebody to be watched off. I've had it to do most of the time ever since I was grown up. First, it was mother. She was sick four years. And then father hurt his hip, and *he* gave out. I tended on him, and done everything else, till he died. After that I went into the mills a spell. But 'twa'n't a great while before my cousin, that married the man that wanted me once, was left, and went weak in her mind — weaker, I should say — and sent for me; so I had to go there, and never got away till after she died,

poor thing! And that led up, finally, to my bein' wanted for her mother. They all depended on me to see 'em through. There never seemed to be anybody else. Other folks — well, they were pinned down, some one way and some another; and nobody's stakes could be pulled up but mine. Now, I've got to go to Mullichunk."

"But certainly you've done your part. Why don't you say so?"

"No use to hang back. It's some folks' part to do the whole of some things. 'Tis as 'tis, and it can't be no 'tiser, as Uncle Zim used to say himself, when he was layin' down the law."

"It may n't be long," suggested Mrs. Clymer remotely.

"That's what they all say to encourage me. Of course, they can't any of 'em last forever. But one day does n't last forever, an' yet three hundred and sixty-five days, one after another, last a year. And then the year begins right over again."

"People can't," said Estabel a little obtusely.

"No. Not the same ones. But there's always somebody. And I'm passed round. Anybody's liable to be, I guess, that once gets started."

So with cheerful energy that belied her blunt protest, Sara Sullivant began to pack her trunk. Estabel told her privately that she believed it suited her best to do what nobody else would do, and that she was really not a bit sorry to go.

"You're pretty sharp, but you're mistaken right exactly there," the good woman replied, with her head under the trunk-lid, holding it up. "It's the *goin'* I am sorry for."

She went on prodding and punching her close bestowals, and did not add any word for a minute or two. If a tear came, she dropped it there and then, and packed it in among her stockings. But she lifted her

head bravely when she did emerge, and said, "I sha'n't be sorry for the gittin' there. I'm needed, an' that's enough. And I like both hands full. Too, I'll have 'em. For if Uncle Zimri's anything, he's pernickity."

Estabel fell back upon the stereotyped consolation.

"It will have to come to an end, and then, maybe you'll — but where shall *we* all be?"

"That's it," said Sara. "That's always it. Things go on, and go off, and you never can catch hold where you let go. An' snappin' turtles live a thousand years, they say."

Mr. Clymer did not enter into his wife's dismay at losing Sara. "There are plenty of women to be had," he said.

"That's what a man thinks, I suppose," retorted Mrs. Clymer, "whether it's a housemaid or a wife." Mr. Clymer laughed.

But his turn came when Archibald announced to him that he had made up his mind to get married, and set up in a little business, with a wife to help him who knew the ropes. "A stylish little restyouraunt," he said.

Mr. Clymer laughed. "Pooh, pooh! Better think twice. Might rest your aunt, but won't rest you, nor your wife. Better off where you are, and she wherever she is."

"That ain't the way it looks to us. We *have* thought twice — once apiece — and we're both agreed. But we won't be in a hurry — not unreasonably. The spring'll do. I've had a good place here, and I won't leave you in any lurch. That's why I spoke now."

"Very well. We'll let it rest, then. You may think better of it, after all," he repeated.

"Guess not, sir," was the reply. "Could n't think better of it than I do now — no way."

After that, Mr. Clymer began to admit to himself that things were unsettling, and that new arrangements might come about.

Sara Sullivant was persuaded to wait for another letter and consider whether she also might not stay till spring.

"He 's got a sister, Uncle Zimri has," she admitted; "and she ain't got any children. She 's doin' for him now — it 's she that 's sendin' after me — an' if I 'd broke my neck, or got married myself, she 'd have had to keep on doin'. Good mind to pretend I have."

"Which?" Estabel asked gleefully, delighted at the possible reprieve.

"Well, either — both. Don't much signify, I guess."

So the partly packed trunk was shut up, and Sara stayed on, more for the persuasive pleasure in Estabel's eyes than for her mistress's remonstrance or proffer of increased wages.

"It 'll be full as satisfactory to see *you* through, first," she said to Estabel upstairs.

"Oh, Sara!"

"Well, you know what I mean. And come to think, it *is* seein' through, every time you end up anything. Every piece of livin' is a life; an' maybe the' ain't so much differ'nce in the endin's as we 're apt to conject."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WEST GARDENS AND SHAWME STREET.

WEST GARDENS was built up.

On the time contracts, labor had been pushed. Organization and executive management had been admirable. Not an hour had been lost.

The last workman had gone off with his kit of tools. The last dray had carted from the premises ladders, scaffoldings, remnants, rubbish. The sanded sidewalks, broad and even, swept around the ample curve. Even gardeners had done their work, and behind the gilt-tipped iron rails that shielded the little grassplots in the intervals between the outside flights of brownstone steps, the sods were green, and in narrow beds along the basements, far enough back to be safe from marauding reach, bulbs of tulip and of crocus were sending up green blades, low blooming flowers, and budding stems. Along the stonework, and clasping with venturing rootlets the bricked walls, were already visible the beginnings of beautiful vine tapestry, the first stitches, as it were, of an embroidery that should by and by cover the fronts with draperies of alternating verdure and resplendent color.

A number of the dwellings were already occupied, and the graceful balconies of iron tracery, touched and tipped with gilding like the rails below, were being filled with potted plants in flower. West Gardens people were beginning on the determination to live up to the name of their demesne. It was springtime in the city, and things were fresh, and dwellings old and new looked open, bright, and garnished.

Down in Shawme Street little gardens, running to the river, were taking on their greenness, and their lilac bushes and peony clumps were in the bud, and the lilies of the valley, in sheltered southward nooks, were unfolding some of their white bells. The river shone in the sun, the air blew sweet from the westward across the broad, calm water, and in at the house windows gladly flung awide. But in one house — our one house there — was trouble.

David Hawtree lay ill and prostrate, broken down with the strain and tension of his winter's overwork and his pressing anxieties. Only himself knew all about it, but the grandmother and the young daughter knew very well that he had "done too much," and that the hard undertaking entered upon bravely and hopefully a year ago had been at best but an unpaying labor, and so had "taken out of him" proportionally to what it had failed to give. They had seen how in all these last months strength had been lessening, and a cloud of perplexity and discouragement had been settling down upon countenance and manner, showing itself in the wan look of mornings, that betrayed sleepless nights, and in brief unenjoyed partaking of daily meals. At last, with some slight provoking incidental cause, positive disease had fastened its grasp upon him and laid him low. For this is what it does — the manifest thing that we call an attack of illness: it seizes upon that which is made ready for it by the undermining of natural power and healthy resistance, and by its cruel hold drags deathward. In later days we have called it "grip," not realizing our own instinctive discrimination, nor how literal and explicit the word is.

The three houses for which David Hawtree had taken the carpentry contracts were really built out of his life. Early and late, in positive labor and unceasing responsible watchfulness, the work had taxed him to the utmost. Added to this, courage and incentive had given

place, first to doubt, and then to a disastrous certainty that the agreement in which he was bound was proving for him a losing one. Brace and Buckle had made theirs, which included all lesser bargains, at the lowest possible calculation. They knew it was a risk; but even if they only came out of this "by the skin of their teeth," it would open the way, as was already indicated, to their opportunity in other more lucrative engagements in which they could insist upon better conditions. Or, if very worst came, there was a way out — for them. Nobody could blame them for not accomplishing impossibilities; there were a hundred circumstances always to adduce: times, prices, delays and accidents of weather, a bad business and atmospheric season, through all of which hindrance they had redeemed their original pledges; the evidence of which, as of probity and ability, and also for justification in closer future reckonings, would stand. Meanwhile, they took the skin off smaller men's teeth, and were leaving consequences to drop wherever they might finally alight.

Mr. Hawtree, and others like him, had found it difficult to get money in advance to pay off journeymen. Brace and Buckle "did not get their money in advance," they said. "It was n't a kind of thing to go into without capital." "We'll give you our notes for six months each, on interest," they told him, and with that he had to be satisfied. But upon the second six-months notes he had failed to raise ready money; he could not get a sufficiently strong indorser; the business season was really a shaky one; there were preliminary thrills of earthquake; the brokers would not discount reasonably. Clymer and Steeples themselves virtually refused. Hawtree had to hold the paper in the hope of ultimate payment.

So he sold out snug investments, that neither workmen nor work might suffer; when that was not enough, he mortgaged his house, and another that he had built

and leased; and at last, seeing what might come to be the final result, and feeling in himself the threatening of what did come in bodily condition, he made over his life insurance policy to the benefit of his friend, R. Thistlestoke, whose lumber, on his credit, had gone into the elegant, thorough-built structures of the new residential centre.

And now he lay, waiting the end.

"Poor little Lilian! Poor little Lilian!" he would say in low breaths of half-wandering speech. "I've done so badly for my little girl. But I've tried — I've tried — to do my best. And I'm going to die an honest man. God knows; I've got to leave it with Him now. He takes up the things we have to drop."

And then, presently, he would turn his head feebly, and, clinging still to life and to what might possibly revive it, would whisper, "Tonic — tonic!" and open his lips for the teaspoonful that would be brought.

Estabel had established the habit of going to see Lilian and the dear Gladmother on Sunday afternoons. Sunday drew her especially; for the day was in tune with the visit. The Gladmother's room was like a church; she always got there what Sunday ought to bring. It made up, perhaps, for some lack elsewhere. Also, it was almost her only free time from lessons and other requirements; Aunt Vera took her weekly, quiet nap; other days she had to go out, or to be ready dressed at home for company; Sunday she had stillness, freedom, and wrapper comfort. Mr. Clymer was always busy in his little private room; some little sheep were invariably in the pit on the Sabbath day, conveniently and comfortably impounded there for the leisurely rescue.

Perhaps this custom of Estabel's had not taken inviolable form until after the break in Dr. North's visits, which had often been in the interval between afternoon

service and early tea, to which he was apt to stay. Estabel missed these weekly episodes and their pleasant anticipation.

It was on a Sunday afternoon, therefore, that Lilian, having watched her coming, met her noiselessly at the garden door. "I cannot ask you in, dear," she said. "I just came down to kiss you. Father is very ill."

"Oh, Lil! I won't keep you a minute. But what is it?"

"It began with influenza. Almost everybody has had that. We did n't think of being anxious about it. But now it is pneumonia, and the doctor is afraid typhoid."

"Oh, Lil!" Estabel said again, and put her arms around the girl with a strong clasp, as if she would hold her away from her trouble.

"I must come again and ask. But not to hinder you, or anybody. Could n't you make some sign for me? Then I could just come, and look, and go away."

The two girls agreed that if Lilian could not come down, she would put a white handkerchief in the west front window. If her father continued about the same, it should be in the middle of the sash; should he be better, it should hang, more or less, according to the circumstance, to the inside right. Or if worse, it should be moved in like manner to the left.

"And I shall tuck a bit of a note under the door sometimes," said Estabel. "Only you are not to try to answer it."

It was well that they had arranged the little telegraphy, for when Aunt Vera was told of the illness she made Estabel change all her clothing and take a bath; had the outer garments hung out upon the line, and peremptorily forbade the girl to go to the house again. It was only after a promise that she would approach no nearer than the corner from which she could perceive the signal, that the sentence was commuted to allow so much as that.

"All those things are horribly contagious," declared Mrs. Clymer.

"Being sorry is contagious, too," said Estabel.

"And all those things are everywhere. I might walk another way and get something worse. But of course I shall do as you tell me."

About the bit of a note, now especially necessary to her satisfaction, she quickly devised a way to compass that. Street delivery of mail was not yet in Topthorpe. She wrote a tender little message to Lilian, explaining all. "But I can't be kept away," she added. "The Gladmother has shown us the way round. In the inside of everything I shall be close to you. For you know the things that happen to you are as if they happened to me. I shall be thinking to you — not just *of* you — all the time."

She put the note into another envelope, addressed to Dr. North, with a line asking him to take the inclosure to Lilian, and sent Archibald over with it to the doctor's office.

Ulick North sat looking at the girlish but firm chirography longer than needed to read the words. It was the first communication he had received from Mount Street since what he had regarded as his expulsion. He wondered just what inference he might draw now from this.

Had Estabel not missed him? Did she know or did she not know? Did this say to him, "I am where I always was. I understand"? Or did it mean, "I am aware of nothing; I have been concerned about nothing"? The simplicity, the directness, were themselves a puzzle. Curiously, it is so, with persons who themselves are most unflinchingly direct. Perhaps because the smallest word or act, with them, is never empty of a meaning.

Yet why should this girl of seventeen have a meaning, to be significantly direct or indirect about? And why should he be looking for such a meaning?

"Life is full of symptoms, to a doctor," he said to himself derisively. He put the note for Lilian in his waistcoat pocket. The other he restored to its envelope and dropped into a side drawer of his open office desk. He had a way of keeping notes and letters for a while. There were often those to which he might need to make some reference. Perhaps he disposed of this mechanically, or his wastebasket may have been just beyond his reach.

He took his hat, and walked down Clover Street to see his patient.

Day after day Estabel went down in the late afternoon to that Clover Street corner where it crossed Shawme, from which, diagonally, there was a view of the Hawtrees' windows.

Day after day the white handkerchief hung from the middle fastening. "No better," that meant. But it meant, certainly also, "no worse." Or perhaps Lilian shrank from confessing that it was by any different inference equivalent to "not as well."

"Oh, I know she will hate to move it, the least bit, until she can move it right," Estabel would say to herself as she turned sadly away.

But by and by it did move. Just a little aside, to the left. The next day, farther. There it stayed, between the two side panes of the old-fashioned glazing, for three days. Then it crept a little farther yet. Its white folds filled the last pane. The last was drawing near.

And still Estabel could not go to them; could do nothing; and there was no word to say. She only knew that Lilian and the Gladmother would know; would feel her thought. Inside — knowing, all of them, that inside way — they were face to face. Better, they were heart to heart. Written word would even seem to displace this.

She never happened to see Dr. North. He was there

at morning, noon, and night, earlier and later, but not at Estabel's particular hour. Once or twice she had the impulse to go herself to Dr. North's office, and learn all. But something withheld her. It would not be quite open with Aunt Vera. She felt sure that Uncle Clymer would not like it. And something else that she did not try to define, since she had both these reasons already, made it seem impossible to her. "Besides," she comforted herself somewhat lamely with concluding, "doctors never do tell anything."


It was on a Saturday afternoon, as the light softened in the shaded streets and shone level across the river, that she walked with look bent downward, for fear of what she might see too soon, along the familiar uneven old brick sideway where the little pools left by the brief shower of an hour before lay glistening, and stopped, still delaying the glance she dreaded, at the crossing.

She heard the closing of a door, and lifted her head involuntarily. At the same moment a carriage came down Clover Street, and turned the corner at which she stood, interposing between her and that which her eyes sought. But they waited, fixed; her line of sight was broken only as a ray of light may be. It fell straight upon its point when the way was open, and upon nothing else.

The white signal was no longer there. It had finished its slow transit, and had passed aside. Its story was all told.

In its place, there stood upon the window ledge a tall, clear vase, from which long plumes of ferns lifted themselves delicately, swept right and left, like fair, green wings, across the panes, and then bowed tenderly downward, dropping out of sight.

They spoke the parable of the invisible, of which their fronds and seeding are mysterious type. They declared also the new, strong, beautiful life which loosens itself upward out of the heavy, hiding mould,



and from the deep roots of continual being unfolds into an upper joy and an endless freedom, from whose blessed franchise it finds way to bend and touch again, with dear, remembering grace, the earth-spot that it grew from.

Estabel knew every syllable of that sweet sign speech. The lovely meanings had been given her long ago. She stood still, gazing with wide eyes, from which unheeded tears fell gently, upon the type show of a wonderful revelation, not of death, but of a rising from death. She hardly knew whether it were the pain of a sorrow that appealed to her and which she felt, or that of an exalted joy.

Her hands, which she had clasped together in sudden stress of emotion, had fallen before her, still joined; her whole aspect was of a self-forgetting in a sublimity that announced itself — that can only announce itself — alongside a sentence or a prophecy that must mean also suffering. She was — as human nature at its highest and deepest — in the presence of birth or the presence of that which is both death and birth — is always; in the attitude of Mary, accepting the word of the angel.

It was only for a moment, though the moment held so much of life.

She knew, with secondary, indifferent perception, that some person was approaching from just beyond the narrow crossing beside which she stood. She paid no heed, except to move toward the curbstone, that the passer-by might take the inner way. Intent upon the reading of that great, grave message through its gentle symbolism, she was aware of nothing else of her surrounding. The whole great city about her was as a blank, a silence.

Dr. North came close beside her, and spoke her name, holding out his hand.

Without surprise, without other movement, she lifted both hers, locked as they were, and laid them upon his.

Her eyes slowly turned, and met the gentleness of his look upon her.

"Lilian?" The name, with its question, came softly, as if of itself, from between her parted but unmoving lips.

"She is asleep. Everything is done, and she is obeying me. He died at noon to-day. She asked me to let you know, and to tell you that by and by — 'when it is right,' she said, and you can come — she will be glad of you. I had written the message on my card, to leave in Mount Street. Shall I walk up with you, now? We had better not stand here."

He offered her his arm. "Thank you; I don't need that," she said; and turned around with him, retracing by his side the way through Shawme Street.

Going up the steep pitch of Mount Street, she stopped suddenly. He held out his arm again, and looked in her face with a quick scrutiny. She answered it as quickly.

"I am all right," she said. "But I must ask you something. Why did he have to die?"

She put the question as if she really thought it could be answered.

"Because it has to come to us all," the doctor replied. "When one has lived all one can — longer or shorter — life must go."

"Why could n't you help him?"

"The help was all the other way. On this side we can only help what is tending — striving — toward us; coming *back*. When it begins to *go* we are powerless."

"When what begins to go?"

"I said. What we call life."

"It only began," said Estabel, repeating what she had first been told, "with a common influenza. Why could n't you stop that — there — then?" She demanded it almost imperatively. So we do demand of the moment, — the chance that we think has been in the moment, — that is passed.

"It began," said Dr. North, stirred to sudden unsparing utterance, "with those infernal contracts; with Brace and Buckle, who failed a month ago. That was their way out of it. They are alive—as they count living—and he is dead. It was those things killed him—the unjust bargainings, by which all that was built."

He lifted his left hand and swept it toward West Gardens. The plate glass in the great clear windows of the tall bowed fronts on the upper side caught the sunset lights, and were gorgeous with their blazing reflections of the western sky.

From the street up to the dormer windows, every casement showed rich, delicate, or simply dainty inner draperies, — of costly silk in luminous colors, of frosty-patterned lace, of pretty, stainless muslin quaintly folded back. Innocently splendid, like the clouds of heaven. Sweet with orderly comfort, from base to roof. Why not?

Estabel looked, and clenched her teeth.

Down in Shawme Street there had been the sorrow signal. Tender hands had placed it there, a reverent, loving token of a life passed on. Hopeful, acquiescent, even with a holy triumph in it, but a thing made manifest in tears, against deep loss.

The way of life is yet, to the earth vision inflexibly, the way of death. Suddenly that hard, sad side — not the beautiful and heavenly one — was all that Estabel could see. Things did not happen rightly, as if of God's full intent. The wrong of the world — and the death in the world — these crashed together and resolved themselves into the terrible unity they held from the day of the sentence in Eden to the Easter Day of a new Evangel — as they will crash together still, till the world learns and lives in all the power of the Divine Resurrection and the Endless Life.

Ulick North had not meant to say it. Neither had

Estabel, until the instant, meant to ask him what she did.

"It was cruel of me to tell you that," he said.

"It is the truth of it that is cruel," she answered him. "Cruel! Cruel!"

She repeated the words, standing where she had paused, stamping her foot unconsciously. And then a kind of fury of pain, of accusal, of remorse for others, seized her, and she started forward, almost rushing away from her companion.

A carriage came down the hill, and drew up before the Clymers' door.

"It is Aunt Vera. Good-by." The words were shot back at him over her shoulder as she hurried on.

She sprang up the steps, and rang the bell violently while the carriage door was being opened, and Aunt Vera, with her back turned, was gathering up shawl and cardcase and little shopping bundles.

Dr. North would not have avoided the encounter if Estabel had allowed him to continue his escort naturally; he was not at all afraid of meeting Mrs. Clymer. As it was, he hesitated for an instant, from habitual impulse of courtesy, whether to advance and assist the alighting lady; but in that case it would have been awkward for her not to invite him in, and as Archibald quickly appeared, he yielded to a finer instinct and crossed the street.

Estabel, heeding only her own escape, ran into the house, and straight upstairs, like a wild, driven creature.

Mr. Clymer had come out from his study upon the upper landing, when the carriage had stopped, and the bell so madly pealed. He had taken a few steps downward when Estabel, blindly unperceiving, rushed toward him from the foot.

"What on earth is the matter?" she suddenly heard him call; and midway up she stopped short.

At this moment Mrs. Clymer set foot on the lowest stair.

Estabel turned from one to the other, trapped.

There were tears upon her cheeks, and her cheeks were burning.

"Oh, don't speak to me!" she cried out, and put her hands before her eyes.

Archibald was in the hall below. The three upon the stairs stood blocking each other's way.

"What does it all mean?" asked Mrs. Clymer, in amazed annoyance.

Her husband turned back to clear the passage, and to regain the privacy of his own room.

Estabel would have gone by, and ascended the further flight to hers; but Mr. Clymer summoned her peremptorily.

"Come in here," he commanded. "Vera, stop a moment. We will have this explained." Since there was evidently no bodily catastrophe, he resented the commotion.

"Is this the way to enter the house?" he interrogated Estabel. And then he closed the door behind Aunt Vera.

Again Estabel, at bay, looked from one to the other in a strange, accusatory, restrained distress. Her eyes flamed with the heat that had dried up tears.

Mrs. Clymer had a surmise of something of the truth.

"Something has happened in Shawme Street," she said, deprecatingly, to her husband. "Is that it, Estabel? But why should you behave like this?"

Then Estabel spoke in a strained, unnatural tone.

"Lilian's father is dead."

"Well?" responded Mr. Clymer, as if he would have said, "What then, to you, or certainly to us, that there should be all this demonstration?" He was not cruel-hearted; but the event had happened in Shawme Street. There was no reason that 84 Mount Street should be invaded with a shock.

Then Estabel forgot everything but the thing that urged her with its wrong; that had driven out of her all peaceful thought of death, and made this death an outrage and a crime.

"*Well!*" She repeated the syllable with all the emphasis of her pain and scornful indignation. "Do you think it is well, Uncle Clymer, that he should be dead, and that you and the rest of those rich men should have all those splendid houses that he helped to build, when the wicked contracts that he had to make for them are what has killed him?" Her words poured forth with rapid vehemence.

"Do you know what you are saying, Estabel?" The question came sternly, but Mr. Clymer would not yet give way to open wrath.

"I know that Brace and Buckle failed and did not pay him. And I know that it made him sick, and that he is dead."

"Who told you so?"

"Dr. North," replied the girl, beyond thinking of fear or favor.

"Damn Dr. North!"

After that there was a sudden silence in the room. The evil word of cursing, uttered by the leading vestryman of the Church of the Beatitudes, petrified the women, and there was no more that the leading vestryman could immediately say. He had the grace to turn away a moment from their faces, and resume something of an outward control.

He took up a cigar that he had laid, half smoked, upon the mantel edge, knocked off the dead ash, saw that the spark was dead, and laid it down again. He put his hand upon the back of his desk chair, as if he would seat himself and return to his occupation which the disturbance had interrupted. But his motions were all vague and uneasy. The disturbance, in effect, remained. The two women stood there, looking at him,

loth to leave as at the bad word, and not knowing what to say.

He spoke again, covering his ebullition with a calmer utterance, and a show of tolerant, if justly displeased, reasoning.

"What has Dr. North to do with it? And what if Brace and Buckle have failed? We are not responsible for that. We took them at their own offer. We forced no contracts. We have nothing to do with the people they employed. But why should I talk business with you?" He broke off, rebuking with the word both his own false position and hers.

It was equivalent to "You have no business with the matter. I am not bound to explain to you." But Estabel was untouched by the intimation. She had lost sight of everything but the one vital question — the one terribly absorbing fact.

"It seems to me," she said, "as if the responsibility reached back all the way. As if somebody — even at the farther end of things — ought to have made them right."

She, as well as Mr. Clymer, spoke more quietly. The thunderclap had left a certain calm behind it. But she was still intense. "I can't *bear*," she went on, warming, "to think of that twelve per cent. interest — and its being made out of this! I wouldn't have it mine for anything; and I hate to have any of it yours, Uncle Clymer!"

There was a generous pleading even in her swelling expostulation. Its climax was an appeal altogether tender.

"It seems to me, young lady," Mr. Clymer rejoined deliberately, turning full toward her and looking down upon her with a cool fixity that was more angry and contemptuous than a frown, or any quick, outbursting word, "that it is about time you were back in Stillwick."

"Oh, it is! It is!" broke forth Estabel, all her

pain and passion, her hurt affection, her conflicting gratitude and indignation, finding irresistible vent at once. "I ought to have been there long ago. I ought to have stayed there always. I will go right away. But I never will forget all you have both done for me!"

And with that she fled out of the room.

"Poor child!" said Aunt Vera softly. "I'm sorry for her. She takes everything so hard. But I do think she means right, Abel."

She would have saved Estabel, if she could, from her husband's unyielding displeasure. She knew very well what that could be. Things were at a troublous pass. There had been Ulick North. That had not distressed her very much; that was strictly Mr. Clymer's affair. He could ask his nephew back whenever he chose. There had even been a temporary relief in that direction. But now here was Estabel. This sent down, apparently, all her own house of cards.

She had been getting tired of her charge — as for the present, — true. Matters had not joined or balanced themselves to happy or secure results. But there had still been a possible future, and Estabel was all she had to care for or to build upon. She had been willing to shake off her responsibility — to break up untoward complications — for a time, and make of Europe that refuge which it was becoming for so many American perplexities; but she had thought "things would work round;" that she could come back and take them up again at a point of better advantage. Now, how would it be? How would Estabel ever be asked — or persuaded — back again?

All this flashed through her mind, dismayfully, while she stood silent after her feeble intercession, which Mr. Clymer noticed with no word.

"When does her school term close?" he asked at length, with a matter-of-fact brevity, as he might have

inquired when a servant's time would be up. He was gathering up loose papers from his desk and bestowing them in their proper pigeon-holes and drawers. He had reverted to his own affairs and occupation. The little episode just over was of secondary consequence.

"In about a fortnight, I believe," said Mrs. Clymer.

"Very well. She can stay till then. Afterward, it will not be convenient. We shall be closing up to go abroad."

It was the first direct admission he had made of the intent.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DEPARTURES.

It was one thing to say that Estabel might stay; it might prove to be another question whether Mount Street could keep her.

At that very moment, forgetful of everything but that she had been told it was time she should be back in Stillwick, she was hurriedly, agitatedly, beginning her preparations to go. How could she stay another day — how could she eat another meal — in the house of a man who was under no obligation to her of personal relationship, and who had said she had better be away?

Aunt Vera found her in a confusion of nerves, of tears, of open and emptied bureau drawers and scattered array. The nerves and tears she was scarcely conscious of; the first were tense, the others brimmed up involuntarily, and were dashed away from the clouding of her sight before they fell.

"Now this is nonsense, Estabel," Aunt Vera said, with an effort at coolness. "You can do nothing about all this at present. Put away your things, and calm yourself down. This is Saturday night."

Of course it was; Estabel had had no method in her madness. Sunday was to be lived through, at the very least. There would be no getting to Stillwick — no sending of any word thither — before the Monday. And then, Monday, there was school; there was Mr. Satterwood. The girl was helplessly hemmed in.

When the last thought came to her, she gave way; she threw herself along her bed, upon the side of which

she had been sitting, folding up some underclothing, and let her head fall upon the little pile of it, and the big sobs break forth.

"Estabel, stop! Don't be hysterical! Your uncle did not mean to be hasty with you. He did not mean this, this minute. You provoked him. You said things that he could not bear. You accused him."

"I'm forced into doing horrid things. I can't help it. There's ever so much that ought not to be; it's a cruel, wrong world—the way people manage it. No; Uncle Clymer was not hasty—except when"—She would not finish that sentence. "He said—to me—just what he meant. He does not want me here any more. Oh, Aunt Vera, how soon *can* I go?"

She lifted herself up again as she put the question, and faced Aunt Vera with her flushed cheeks and tear-swollen eyes. Aunt Vera felt herself in a bad place.

She fell back upon mere circumstance. "Your school will not be over for a fortnight, or more. Of course, you cannot break away from that in this fashion. And you know your uncle never meant it. He only said—rather bluntly, to be sure—that you were better off among things and people that you understood. You know you don't fit in here very well, Estabel. You know you are a kind of square peg." She tried to laugh, and make as light of the matter as possible. "When you are older you will see a good many things differently."

"I must write to Aunt Esther. I will do just as she says."

"Don't write a word. If I've done anything kind by you, Estabel, do as I say about this. I don't want your other aunt to know."

She began to speak now from her sincerest thought, and so with clearest effective force. She would not have Miss Charlock told. She would not give up her turn of charge quite so disastrously as this. Besides,

she knew Miss Esther Charlock; she knew the Charlock pride and determination, all through. She would not yet burn her ships behind her. She would not cancel all possibility of that by and by with which she still consoled herself. Mrs. Clymer's motives had been mixed, and in a large part frivolous; but among them had been that which was genuine and prevailing; she was really fond of Estabel, in such way as she knew how to be fond.

And to this Estabel yielded, as she always did. "I won't write anything without your knowing," she said. "But I do want to go."

"You will go properly, and naturally, when school is over. It would have been so, at any rate. Mr. Clymer and I are expecting to go abroad before the end of June. And between now and then he will have to be away in New York and Washington. I should be all alone; and we shall have to say good-by for a long time."

Before she left the room she kissed the girl. It was all made up between these two. For Mr. Clymer, Estabel resolved, upon long reflection, that she—not ought, perhaps—she did not humble herself quite to this—but that she would, offer him some apology for the remonstrance which, coming from her in such impetuous way, had doubtless seemed to him so inexcusable. She could apologize for speech and manner that had offended, but she would take back nothing else. That would leave the "ought" on Uncle Clymer's side; he would be in her debt for his own hard word.

The hard, unseemly word that he had spoken against Ulick North, Estabel could not forget.

She had grown to be attached to her aunt's husband with a respecting, grateful regard. But she felt now as if she could never even like him any more.

Events took themselves into their own hands. On the Monday, after a stiff and mostly silent Sunday interval, during which, however, Estabel found opportunity

to say to Mr. Clymer that she was sorry she had displeased him by anything that he thought impertinent, and he answered, somewhat loftily, that it might pass, — she was young, and would learn better, — that gentleman left home himself, according to a certain prior intention, but no doubt feeling it a little more comfortable for all concerned that he should get away, and his wife and her niece be quietly by themselves as soon as possible. He had to be in New York on Tuesday, he said; he might, or might not, keep on to Washington. He would be at home for the following Sunday and Monday; then he might have to run out to Chicago, and even round by Montreal.

Mrs. Clymer would have time and place to herself, and unhurried opportunity for attention to her house affairs, and all the needful arrangements for closing up.

"And you will help me, Estabel," Aunt Vera had said kindly.

In the midst of all that was grievous, Estabel felt gladly that hindrance had been reprieval. She was learning the wisdom of putting off impetuous action. It was very nice to have Aunt Vera behave so kindly to her. If she had been allowed to carry out her first impulsive purpose without remonstrance, she would not have known how generous Aunt Vera was to her in her heart. And she was thankful, now, that she had been prevented from making the *contretemps* a family affair. What good would it do to set Aunt Esther and Aunt Vera against each other? It would be much like a child making trouble between her parents. She resolved that she would never say a word about it; only, all the same, she did not think she could ever again come to stay at Uncle Clymer's.

Sara Sullivant helped her restore her things to nearly their usual order. It was not worth while to unpack everything; she would be going home so soon. Still-wick *was* home, after all.

She gave to Sara such brief explanatory hint of trouble as could not be avoided; as indeed, with Archibald permeating the house in the discharge of his ubiquitous duties, it would be an absurd pretense to withhold.

"I thought at first I must go home," she said; "but I am not going to, now."

"Shows your sense," was the astute Sara's answer. "It's a poor plan to go off mad. Don't leave any chance for straightening things out. It's always easier to smooth over on the spot, than 't is to come back a-purpose to. Settle as you go along — debts and querrels, my sir used to say. An' gener'lly, if you wait a spell, things happen along to help."

The way they happened to help still further was this:

On the Tuesday morning, bright and early, Simon Peter Babson's wagon, with its wheels at their wide incline from their axles making eccentric tracks along the freshly sprinkled macadam, came yawing up the hill; and at Number 84 Aunt Esther, with grave, important face, alighted at the Clymers' door, just as Estabel came out upon the steps, setting off for school.

The girl dropped her book satchel, and shot herself down upon the sidewalk with open arms. "Dear Aunt Ettie!" she exclaimed. "What can have brought you, just when — I *wanted* a good talk with you?"

There was a pathos in her voice. She was sad enough to-day. Lilian's father was to be buried and she was to go to school as usual.

"Simon Peter Babson brought me. Come into the house and I'll tell you why."

They met Aunt Vera at the drawing-room door, entering the room with a vase of flowers which she had been freshening in the pantry. The "other aunts" mutually stopped short.

Aunt Esther's face was solemn. Mrs. Clymer's was amazed, perturbed. Had Estabel written, after all?

Estabel looked from one to the other. "Please, what is it?" she asked in puzzled apprehension.

"Colonel Henslee died — suddenly — yesterday morning. I've come to take you home, Estabel, to the funeral."

"Oh!" The exclamation broke from Estabel with an uprising force borne from the depth of restrained, accumulated feeling. It uttered more than she was aware; more than Miss Charlock could well understand. Still less could she comprehend when Estabel turned to her, put her arms around her neck, and began to cry softly.

"Why, I didn't think you would care so much as this," she said, with a gentle surprise. "Or ain't you well?"

"Oh, yes, I'm well," the answer came through a checked sob. "But it's all funerals! Lilian's father is going to be buried to-day."

It was such a comfort to have somebody who would be sorry with her for Lilian, that she yielded to the comfort of it and cried on. Mrs. Clymer realized for an instant what her own unsympathy had been.

"There, there! Don't take on about it. He's better off. Everybody's better off when they get through this struggle and snarl, and we ought to be willing. Come into the parlor and we'll talk things over."

"Certainly. Come into the parlor," said Aunt Vera, with procrastinated hospitality.

"Did you want to go?" Aunt Esther put the question with an intuitive sense of how Estabel might have been kept from her friend's side in this trouble. But it was curiously relevant to all the rest.

"Oh, yes. I am glad you have come for me. I wanted you."

"I mean, to this other funeral. Only I'm afraid it will be too much."

"It has been typhoid," said Aunt Vera. "I have not thought it proper that she should go to the house."

"I see. Perhaps not. And yet you may keep away from things and catch 'em, and catch 'em when you keep away from 'em. It is n't much use dodging. Still, one funeral at a time is about enough. And there *ain't* much time, anyway. Write a note to Lillian, Estabel, and go home with me. Afterwards, we'll see what we can do. What you want is to be some comfort to her; and I don't know as it amounts to much to undertake that in the midst of the — particulars."

It was necessary to return to Stillwick with as much promptness as possible. While Estabel was upstairs writing her note and preparing to go, Aunt Esther interviewed the other aunt shrewdly.

"What is it, sister-in-law-in-law? Estabel's got something more on her mind than this Hawtree trouble, or else mixed in with it. What ails her? And what are you holding in?"

To ask that, point-blank, is merely a signal for an extra bar to be put up. Aunt Vera's impassiveness was determinate, and so more significant than before.

"I don't know of anything *but* the Hawtree trouble," she returned. "Estabel is strangely taken up with those people."

"And they ain't the sort you want her taken up with. I see. Do you want me to have her back in Stillwick — for good?"

"Not till her school is over. Then we have decided to go to Europe again. I cannot tell when we shall come back."

"'M! Well, then, *this* experiment's over. I ain't sorry. I s'pose you think it's been a failure. Can't always tell. Half the time folks think a first-rate thing has been a failure, and they think it's been a failure when it's really worked first rate. Time'll tell."

Aunt Vera was comparatively content to leave it so.

"I hope it may turn out for the best," she said. "I've done *my* best."

"According to your lights. That's all anybody can do. And living needs all kinds of lights upon it to show the way—or where there is n't any way, maybe."

Aunt Vera pressed an early luncheon upon them. She was very nice about the note. "Archibald shall go right down with it," she said. "And you may send these violets. I was going to take them to old Mrs. Moraine. But I can get some more."

"Why, that's dear of you!" said Estabel, and came and took the violets, and kissed her.

They went away with kind good-bys, and without any transpiring of uncomfortable complications.

But Aunt Esther knew the other aunt; and she had her thoughts, which bore fruit later.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN THE AWMRY ROOM.

WHAT Aunt Esther brought to pass was this. Estabel did not stay for those last weeks of school at Aunt Vera's. Miss Henslee was persuaded by her brother that it would be better for her to come away from Stillwick for a little time, before entering upon the needful arrangements at the Old Place, or even deciding definitely what her arrangements for the future should be. Although Colonel Henslee's death had come suddenly at the end, there had been a long time of helpless invalidism and close personal care, which had greatly worn upon Miss Lucy.

"You ought to have a change," her brother told her. "And it will be altogether too solitary for you here, just now."

"But I shall be solitary anywhere," the poor lady had urged. "You and Harry will be away all day. And I don't care to go out, and I could n't see company. I have got to learn to be solitary. People must, when they have outlived almost everything."

"That's to be thought of later," said the kind-hearted merchant cheerily. He was not without his own half-developed ideas, but it was too soon to formulate them yet. "We have both been solitary, Lucy. Now we have each other to consider. And Harry. Come to town with us for a little while."

And then Cousin Esther, who was present, suggested, "Why not take Estabel till school is over? Vera Clymer can spare her conveniently enough, now she's

upsetting everything again to go to Europe. Estabel's good company, and she's young. Older folks want something round them that is n't old; that's why the generations come up so fast, — three times in a good long life."

Miss Henslee brightened. She wondered she had not thought of it before. Miss Charlock did not think that strange; it would not have occurred to herself but for that glimpse of second seeing which is the discerning of relative this and that, and putting the obvious two and two together.

Estabel had told nothing which she held it in generosity not to tell. But she talked of Lilian, and spoke of the facts of her sorrow simply as such.

"Mr. Hawtree was tired out and discouraged. He had lost money by his building contracts. And then the sickness came, and he could n't hold out against it. That is what Dr. North said."

"Those West Garden houses?"

"Yes. Those were the last. And the largest work he ever had. They were so happy about it at the beginning. Then everything turned out more dear in price than had been calculated, and Brace and Buckle failed, owing him; and it's the last and the smallest the whole load seems to fall on."

Estabel's voice lowered, and she stopped with a long sigh.

"And the big fellows stand safe on the top of the heap, with their hands in their pockets. Chooty-choo!"

Miss Esther understood it all now, as clearly as if she had been "a fly on the wall" — with human perceptions — during that family colloquy in Mount Street on the Saturday night.

"There's some folks won't know what this world means till they get into the other; not if they go round and round this one forty-seven times," she said succinctly. "And round and round — or back and forth

— ain't compassing it, neither; no more is gethering up the dust of it, till the whole man's turned to it. When the weighin' in the balance comes, it'll be Tekel; and all the mountains of the earth, crumbled fine, won't bear down the scales. — Izyer fortieth."

Miss Charlock stuck a pin with vigor into the band of ribbon she was fastening to a bonnet, and with her long shears snipped off at one clip the superfluous length. With the action she fixed — and cut off — certain points of mental inference and decision just as resolutely.

So it was settled, at the due opportunity; and Estabel had just time, before Cousin Lucy came up to Topthorpe, to explain, and gather up her belongings; and without any breach, but rather with a relieved perception, on either side, of the timely fitness of things, she and Aunt Vera said their preliminary good-bys affectionately, and Estabel joined Miss Henslee on her arrival in Casino Crescent.

Aunt Esther also came up for two or three days, Sunday being included, leaving the shop and housekeeping with Miss Gillespy, to whom it was a rollicking holiday.

"You see, I do get tired of over and over," she said, brimming into pleased and voluble speech with her assent.

"I was reckoning up this morning, while I made my bed, how many times I had done that same thing, and mostly in the same place. Why, ever since I was ten years old. Forty-five years. Forty-five times three hundred and sixty-five. I had to stop and fetch a pencil and a piece of paper to do it: sixteen thousand four hundred and twenty-five times! Don't it tire a person to think of it?"

"Why did n't you eount the miles you've walked, or even the steps you've taken?"

"Yes; and brushing your hair, and your teeth —

while you had 'em — and washing teaspoons, and dusting the same old things" —

"And eating breakfast — and dinner — and supper — three meals every day; three times sixteen thousand four hundred and what is it? That's the hardest of all, to take in at one swallow — and all over again."

"And nothing to show for it but about a hundred and fifteen pounds of tired-out old body," said spare little Miss Eliza Gillespy, the persistent ambition of whose life it had been to grow round and shapely, and who had never achieved it.

She took the subject *au grand serieux* to the last point, not discerning that Miss Charlock was treating it in burlesque.

"It's very good we don't have to calculate, forward nor back — nor take any responsibility about pounds and cubits, nor the white or black of the hairs of our heads," said Miss Charlock. "I guess it all goes to show that it is n't the steps, nor the mouthfuls, nor the pickings-up nor layings-down, that signify; nor the flesh and bones that have gone through it all and come out so much the same old sixpence. It stands to reason there's something else to grow of it. Not but what we've had lots else, all the time — sunshine and summers and bird-singing and flower-blowing; and cosy storms and winter fires; and people to see, and some to love. We've been *alive*, 'Lizy Gillespy, that's the whole story. And it's to be continued."

"Well," said Eliza resignedly, — "I trust it'll grow more interestin' in the second volyum. — My! Won't I have a good time evenin's, among your books!"

Miss Charlock had several objects in her projected visit to Tophthorpe, among which, perhaps, the opportunity for giving a clear good time to Eliza Gillespy had not been overlooked. That was always the "and then" which dropped an extra sugarplum into the scale after the beam was even.

But chiefly she meant to see the Hawtrees, and to try if there might be any possible way to jog circumstance for them. Mr. Henslee was one of the stock company owners and builders of West Gardens. She meant that he at least should learn what she felt reasonably sure Estabel had, in some precipitate, self-defeating way, made known in Mount Street. Happily, Harrison Henslee and Abel Clymer were two somewhat different types of business men.

The first thing to be done was a little justice, if it might be; the next best thing — kindness — might come later. Miss Charlock had already — as had Mr. Henslee — certain indefinite lights upon plans of her own glimmering in the horizon of her mind; but like him she was refraining from pointing them out prematurely. However brilliant one's inspirations may be for others, one must wait to disclose them until those others can be led up more or less nearly to the necessary point of view.

"I want you to go with me to the Hawtrees' tomorrow," said Aunt Esther, looking up from her knitting and across her spectacles, as they all sat together in the big "awmry room" in Casino Crescent. It was the "awmry" room, because one whole side of it was taken up with an immense piece of furniture — wardrobe, cabinets, and drawers — heavy with antique carving and brilliant with rich old polished brass — that had been brought in pieces from England in the last century; they said from the real old Hensleigh Hall; and that had to be built in wherever it was placed. It had been stored in cases for a long time before Harrison Henslee bought this house; the ceilings were not high enough for it at Stillwick-Henslee; nobody thought it would be likely ever to be moved again — unless, indeed, as had been mooted, an alcove were thrown out, or a floor raised on purpose at the country homestead. The old colonel had never cared for that. They all supposed

it had come to its final anchorage in this stately dwelling in the central high precinct of the city. But they reckoned without the premonition of Greater Tophthorpe.

"I want you to go with me to the Hawtrees', Estabel."

Estabel looked up with a grateful smile. Harry Henslee said, "Good for you, Aunt Esther!" He was playing checkers with Estabel, and as he spoke he moved a man so that she immediately put one of hers *en prise*, and then leaped over three of his into the king row.

Harry laughed, and sweeping the pieces into their box, turned to Miss Charlock, to whom he spoke again, without any laugh at all.

"I'm afraid they're going to be very poor," he said.

Aunt Esther had called forth precisely the response and general attention that she wished.

"Then Estabel has told you?"

"Not much. Only that. She thinks they can't have money enough."

"She told me — Estabel, just explain it again, if you please."

Estabel looked a little surprised. Aunt Esther's comprehension was always clear, and her memory distinct. Why did she refer it all to her? But she stated the facts again.

"He lost money by those contracts."

Mr. Henslee laid down his evening paper. "What contracts?" he asked. "And how came you to know?"

"Those houses in West Gardens. And Brace and Buckle failed. And Dr. North said it was the worry and the wearing out that made him sick."

Estabel carefully reserved this time her own personality and indignation. It might be supposed that what Dr. North had told the family had come round, in generality, to her. Mr. Henslee did not know how rigorously she had been kept out of direct communication.

Aunt Esther, still putting her twos and twos together, fitted this subdued reticence to her theory, and was conclusively assured that the girl had spoken freely and been snubbed effectually elsewhere. She boldly took up the word herself.

"Contracts, seems to me, are generally the devil's precautions. They always take the flesh out somewhere. It's nip and tuck all the way through; who can nip the closest, and tuck away the smartest. The best plan, I guess, would be to settle up afterwards, according to how things come out. Then you can see what's fair, all round."

"It wouldn't do to leave things at loose ends like that," said Mr. Henslee, gaining time, perhaps, by means of a little incidental argument. "It only turns the advantage — the power of taking advantage — over to the other side. You must know where you are in business matters. A contract should be just, but settling afterward would be confusion."

"I don't mean at the end of the world," said Miss Charlock. "Every Saturday night, say; or every first of the month; when the bills come in, and the money has to go out. Just keep square as you go along; that looks plain enough when everything is fair. Let the capital take the risks and pay for brains and time and labor what they're worth, and on the spot. It's all wages. 'Agree with your adversary quickly, while you're in the way with him.' That appears to be the New Testament of it."

"Adversary — yes. When the question is the condoning of a quarrel. We're talking of agreements, that suppose no quarrel, but an honorable understanding."

"And don't that tell you how to agree? And as to 'adversary' — we're talking of business. Judging by the common look of things, everybody's an adversary, more or less, that you do business with."

Mr. Henslee laughed. "An adversary is only the opposite party, of course. The world's a game. You have to play your own side of it."

"To play even, the strongest side gives odds sometimes," said Miss Charlock, and there stopped. She had brought the matter home to the starting-point of responsibility; treating in the abstract what Estabel had forced by application to personal offense. Estabel, listening, perceived the better discretion. But then, this was Mr. Harrison Henslee.

That gentleman now addressed herself.

"Of course," he remarked, "*you* don't know just how this Mr. Hawtree has left his affairs. If we could learn, practically, exactly how matters stand, we might perhaps see the way to something. We can't, in the nature of things, follow up all Brace and Buckle's obligations; any crookedness there must rest with them. But there might be a chance somehow to lend a hand in a special case like this. How could we get at it, do you think?"

"R. Thistlestoke would know," Estabel answered quietly.

Mr. Henslee, she could perceive, would by no means go all lengths rashly, as she in her enthusiasm would have people do; but he was evidently a man to move unhesitatingly in the right direction, as soon and as far as he could see it clearly. So she simply replied to his question, in the new wisdom she was learning of her generation.

"I will see Mr. Thistlestoke and Dr. North," Mr. Henslee said. And with that he took up his paper again.

Estabel felt the satisfaction that comes of having put things that are beyond one's self into strong, competent hands. And Aunt Esther resumed her knitting, saying within herself, "*That* bread's set to rise."

On the Sunday afternoon she went with Estabel to Shawme Street.

They were taken up into the Gladmother's room. All the sunshine was let in, and all the rainbows were shimmering their gentle glories, broken into beautiful morsels and streams of separate or gathered color, through the quiet place.

She sat in her great easy chair, in snowy cap and kerchief, and soft gown of black, her countenance serene, her posture restful.

Lilian had been reading to her. An open book lay where she had left it when she went downstairs to welcome them. Her straw bonnet was upon the bed, as she had put it off when she had come back from church. It was not black; there was no black about it; the white straw was crossed with a dark, dark green ribbon, and among the sheathing loops of the lightly knotted bow upon one side some sprays of lily of the valley were so set as to seem springing from out their natural leafage.

Her dress was of pale gray woolen; two or three stems of real lilies were fastened in her golden brooch and dropped their sweet bells down upon her bosom.

There was nothing here of distress or of foreboding; it was a holy peace. The day was heaven's day; it parted the days of earth with blessed pause.

"We are all here," said the Gladmother, with grand uplift in her low, calm utterance. "It's only to make the place sweet and ready; and they come. There is nothing in the way now. It is so different from watching the weakness and the pain that came between."

It was as if they had risen out of it with him who had died, and were walking with him above it all, in the light of the living.

Whatever Miss Charlock and Estabel had come to say or to ask, withdrew for the time from their lips and passed out of their thought. What was there here to comfort? What care or trouble to inquire into? Certainly, at least, this was not the moment, and the way was not open, for that.

But Miss Charlock was a practical woman. She would not ultimately forget the facts she knew, nor the things that she had come for. After a half hour that was like the time of the silence in heaven — which must have been a hushing into a great peace, between earthquake and earthquake, when the voice had just spoken the everlasting promise of the feeding in heavenly pasture and the leading beside living water, and the wiping away of all tears — when these things echoed in the spirit, and if there were words they were but as breaths of calm — Aunt Esther, more ministered to than ministering, withdrew with Estabel, and Lilian accompanied them downstairs.

At the door Miss Charlock turned. "I shall come again," she said. "And I want to ask things, and I hope you won't think me meddlesome, for they've got to be thought of. Your grandmother is in heaven, and I don't dare to call her down. But all the more, you'll want somebody to talk to about what has to be done in this world. And I don't believe anybody cares more that it should be comfortable for you than Estabel and I do."

Lilian kissed and thanked her, and begged her to come when she could, and say what she pleased.

And so the two went off along Shawme Street, and across the long diagonal of Old Park, and back to the Crescent.

"I mean to see this thing straightened out in some shape," said Aunt Esther, as they crossed Trepeake Street, "if I stay till Thursday. And Eliza Gillespy may go her lengths."

Three intervening days were not much; but they represented a campaign, as "all summer" did in years afterward, to General Grant. And Mr. Henslee was a man of business promptness.

Before Monday night he had seen Dr. North and R. Thistlestoke, and Mr. Abel Clymer; was possessed of

all that was to be known of the Hawtree affairs, and had made his first approaches — advisedly, perhaps, at the most difficult point — with the questioning of what might reasonably or possibly be done.

R. Thistlestoke held the insurance policy. "It was to satisfy him," he said. "I could lose the money as well as he could. And I never had any intention that the little girl should lose. But I can't see clear how to make 'em take it back. They'll want it all explained; and they knew he owed me; and there 's the document, indorsed over to my name. I'm only waiting to contrive how to get round it."

"Perhaps it may take several of us to contrive. If Brace and Buckle's paper could be redeemed — or a part of it — there'll be some sort of a percentage, and some of the notes might be bought up — you need n't explain, further than that. You had better offer your help, and take out letters of administration — you are quite the natural person — and we may save something out of the estate."

"And fix the figures a little if they need it," said R. Thistlestoke, with a shrewdly honest smile. "There are some little twists, I take it, that may be step-relations to the father of lies; but step-relations don't inherit!" There was a glee in his bit of humor, that might have been wicked, if his purpose had been; there is a certain delight in daring, righteously, for an emergency, an ordinarily unlawful thing. Probably it is that, in a crude demonstration, which animates some well-known destructive activities at a fire. So, also, men kill, in battle. The dogs of human nature are exultantly let loose in war.

"If it is needed — yes," said Mr. Henslee. "But I think if you take affairs in hand, they will leave everything to you. An old lady — and a young girl — what can they understand, except what you tell them? You'll have the papers, and you'll look it all up."

Surely you can collect a life insurance, and pay over that."

R. Thistlestoke shook his strong, close-thatched gray head. "They knew he owed me," he repeated. "And that he'd given up something to settle it. He talked in his sickness, and I don't know how much he may n't have said, or what they understand. But they'll want to see everything now, before they take a cent. That kind of thing runs in a family."

"We shall have to settle you through Brace and Buckle, then." And Mr. Henslee put on his hat, and went away to find Abel Clymer.

Mr. Clymer "did not propose to cash any of Brace and Buckle's failed paper." "Business is business," he said. "But I'm with you in the matter of a subscription, and I don't care how you apply it. What figure?" And he turned to his desk-table, and drew forth his check-book.

"I'll tell you when I've been all round," said Mr. Henslee. "There are six of us. The life insurance is for five thousand. I think we can manage that much."

"All right. But it's not a good precedent." Mr. Clymer was in for it, and would by no means retreat or hesitate. He had no mind to be left out of good company in a good, above-board generosity, or be obviously taken aback by the amount demanded. He thanked Heaven devoutly that he could afford it. The appeal was to his record on earth, not to the account kept elsewhere. He was in a very good humor when Mr. Henslee took his leave.

"You've got that little niece of my wife's at your house, I find," he said. "It's easy to track a mouse sometimes; I think I can follow her up on this. She began with me, but she slapped the thing rather too directly in my face. Tell her that a man does n't always mean every word he says, when he's taken by surprise and

provoked to say it in a hurry. And, by the way, if you see that fellow Ulick, tell him, will you, that I expect him to call here before we go away. I shall be off a good deal just at present, but a week or two will finish that, and we don't sail till the 30th."

In the awmry room again that evening Mr. Henslee reported to his family party.

"I think we shall raise the money," he said. "Thistletoke is to manage the matter with the Hawtrees. A good, honest fellow, that. Estabel, what did you say to your uncle — Mr. Clymer — about this?" He looked at Estabel with a quizzical smile. She started, and the color flushed up into her face.

"No harm," said Mr. Henslee. "I was only curious to know, from a remark of his, what a mouse could have slapped in his face."

"Probably a tale," said Estabel demurely.

"With a pretty sharp, quick lash? Never mind. It's all right. He's been very liberal about this."

"I only told him," Estabel resolutely explained, with a quite recovered calmness, "what Dr. North said about Mr. Hawtree's sickness, and the worry that brought it on. But I ought not to have repeated it in the way I did. I said it was all those wicked contracts."

"Portia, rebuking half a dozen Shylocks!" said Mr. Henslee in great apparent amusement. "And what did he say?"

"I don't believe I had better tell you."

Estabel caught her Aunt Esther's keen, inquisitorial glance. Thumbscrews would not have wrung from her what Uncle Clymer had said to herself. But she saw that its nature was likely to be inferred, confirming a first guess; and she made instant daring diversion.

"He said, 'Damn Dr. North.'" She repeated the remark in as quiet, matter of fact a way as if it had been in any other three words.

Mr. Henslee and Harry shouted. "'Tell the truth,

and shame the devil.' Estabel, you always do!" the young man cried.

Even Cousin Lucy smiled.

Aunt Esther scarcely relaxed her scrutinizing gaze, while Mr. Henslee gave Estabel, as seemed here appropriate, her uncle's message, which she received comfortably, referable as it was to the explosive observation she had just quoted.

"Please don't tell Dr. North," she begged, with a freshly aroused sense of unwarrantableness in the use of his name to which she had been led.

"Oh, I'm commissioned with a good word for him also," returned Mr. Henslee. "And I shall not exceed my commission."

Aunt Esther turned her look on him still gravely.

"I never studied algebray," she observed. "But it looks to me as if there was some algebray at work. There's an unknown quantity somewhere, and only one small peg to hang your calculation upon, if I understand the sort of thing. Well — I ain't one to want to know more than I'm told; nor to be wise above that which is written. I believe that's in the Bible, though I was looking for it in the Concordance the other day, and could n't find it."

"Estabel," she said to her niece when they were undressing in their adjoining rooms that night, "I suppose *you* mean to go and see your other aunt — and your uncle-in-law — now and then, before they start, don't you?"

And Estabel answered, "Why, of course, Aunt Esther."

"Chooty-choo! You're a sphinx," said Miss Charlock. Then as she laid her last particular hairpin in its particular, detached place upon her dressing-table, she went on, with certain enigmatical enunciations.

"I can tell you one little bit of experience, though.

You can't bring even a lead pencil to a good clean point by slashing away at what holds the whole thing together. You'll be sure to break it off short. First sharpen down carefully what point you've got, and when that's fine you can cut away all the wood you want to. Wood's habit, and lead's character."

"Thank you, Aunt Esther. I'll remember that the next time I sharpen a lead pencil."

Aunt Esther thought to herself, as she got into bed — without any reminder of the Old Serpent, — "That girl's one of us now. She's grown up."

Ulick North called in Mount Street. He was received as if he had been there once a week. But as he took his leave his uncle, accompanying him to the door, said to him, "We haven't seen so much of you lately as we used to. I hope you have been kept busy in your practice. I wouldn't have liked to go away without saying good-by. We don't think exactly alike about everything; but I don't quarrel, as I told you before. If I get back all right, maybe we shall understand each other better. We shall both be a little older, though that doesn't make so much difference at my time of life. If I don't get back — well, you mustn't be surprised if you find an old man can have whims as well as a young one."

It was very enigmatical. He said it in a perfectly friendly tone, and even lightly; but it was evident that by figure as well as in fact, he stood in firm consciousness upon his own doorstep, and Ulick North upon a step below. It was also clear that this was meant for the good-by.

"Good-night, uncle; and good-by," the young doctor responded. "I hope you'll have a pleasant trip, and come back all right, and in good time."

He went down into the street, and Mr. Clymer shut the door.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AUNT ESTHER'S SOLO.

MR. THISTLESTOKE advised the selling of the house. A mortgage was a millstone, always; and it was hard to make renting pay. Repairs, insurance, taxes — a house was a kind of a highway robber, anyway, unless you could afford to make a home of it.

"Of course, it's hard — for the old lady, especially. But I take it she's one of the sort that you may turn out of house, if you please, but you can't out of home. She'll see it's more reasonable; the income of five thousand dollars is n't a terrible sight, for a living; and they won't want to eat up their cake. Land is coming up on Shawme Street; folks are finding out that the river is pleasant. I should n't wonder if the property was to bring considerable over the mortgage. As it is now, it won't pay any interest, except to the mortgagee."

"It's good and it's safe," Estabel said to Miss Charlock soberly. "They'll see it's right, and they'll do it. But the lovely old rooms, and the rainbows! Where else can they go? What will they do?"

"I sha'n't stand round saying that. Everybody tunes up in that chorus. If I sing at all, it'll be a solo. I don't know what *they* 'll do; but I know what I shall, and where my part comes in. I mean to ask them to come to Stillwick, chandelier-drops and all."

Estabel's soberness flashed into sudden delight; her reluctant word of acquiescence into an acclamation of joy.

"Why, Aunt Esther! That's the brightest thing — the very sweetest — the *sublimest* thing — that anybody ever thought of! How did it come into your head? I know," — flying at and squeezing her comely proportions in a strong young embrace, — "right from your great, big, pretending-to-be-inaccessible Mont Blanc of a heart!"

"Chooty-choo! No such thing. It's only common sense. It's the best thing all round, that's all. I'm only buttering my own bread. I'm a speculator. It's in the air of Tophthorpe, and I've caught it. But I wish my *house* was." She was reverting, regardless of verbal connection, to the comparison with Mont Blanc. "I believe it's generally the folks that have the little houses that come across the most to fill 'em up with. And folks that come across the most — well, there might be ways, after all," she broke away vaguely, failing to grasp with her usual precision the elements of her own peculiar style of transposition. "If they turn out to be necessary, that is. Things come round to match, once in a while, and I might feel it consistent to add on a piece. Mr. Henslee says the railroad's coming round our way, along the river from Peaceport; and they'll want some of our land — yours and mine; that long heater-piece beyond the old woods and the gravel bank. They'll want our gravel, too; lays right to their hand. They'll give us eighteen hundred dollars. And all the land round there will be coming up in price. The depot'll be at the little upper village by the bridge. It'll build out right and left. Not that I want to sell — in any hurry. But it'll be yours some time, and I'm glad of that. We'll keep the old woods, and the old comfort a while."

There was something very nice in being talked to so by Aunt Esther. It conveyed to Estabel that excellent relative's own impression of her, that she was now grown up — into the sympathies and confidence of her

elders, as beginning to be one with them. It was that, and not the dignity.

Everything was full of comfort suddenly. "It seems as if the woods, and the brook, and the river, and the birds might make up," she said to herself, thinking cheerily of Lilian and the Gladmother. "And the rainbows can come, too. Aunt Esther understands."

Mrs. Trubin met them precisely on that ground, and with the very words they had anticipated, when they talked of it with her — putting very gently, tentatively, the compensations of the offered plan: country air and sunshine and quiet sweetness — grass, great trees, wide open mornings, unbroken sunset splendors and deep calms of night — for the old wontedness that must be given up. Would she exchange? Would n't she be willing? Would n't it be even more of the best that had made it — as to the outside — so pleasant here? More to which to join the sweetest of the home feeling? That was n't in the walls.

"No," said the Gladmother. "It never is. It is n't the place, but what is *in* the place — and what reaches down into it — that makes it dear. We can take all our rainbows with us. The light's everywhere, and home's everywhere. When we move, we move the whole of us — whether we change houses or worlds. We only leave the shell. We don't grow to that. I'm not troubled. There's always a place prepared."

She folded her hands and smiled.

With Lilian, Miss Charlock had approached the subject on its practical side, which she knew must be made quite clear to her.

"Had you thought of anything?" she asked her. "Anything to do, I mean, if you stayed here?"

"I thought that perhaps I could make bonnets."

"Well, you and I thought alike. I *know* you could. That's just what I want of you. I'll tell you the honest truth. That straw bonnet of yours, when I saw

it Sunday, with the green loops, and the lilies of the valley standing up amongst them as if they'd grown so, settled my mind about that part of it, if it *was* Sunday, and a house of mourning. You can't help seeing things, if you're ever so sorry. I want you to come to Stillwick, and make bonnets with me. It'll be an independent income. It's all for the main chance with me, as much as you. I'm looking out for number one." Aunt Esther had to impress this view of the case very strongly, to justify her own common sense, as well as to persuade the nice sense of obligation in her hearer. "You'll bring newness. You'll have a live idea for every separate thing. And you'll bring custom. Custom likes to go a little out of the way, sometimes, when it can discover something all for itself. You'll do more in Stillwick — once you begin — in a single year, than you could do on Marlinton Street in ten. Peaceport has found out, already, and Tophthorpe will. There's going to be a railroad. It all bears down to one point. Don't you think you and your grandmother could make up your minds to be contented in Stillwick?"

"Dear Miss Charlock! We *must* make up our minds to leave here; and I think that Stillwick — where you live — is just next door to heaven."

"No, it ain't. It's next door to a very common family. Only, there's always two sides; and the other way, with a beautiful mile of woods between — is the Henslee Place. The nearest is n't always next, and you may n't always be next to what you're nearest."

CHAPTER XL.

EVENINGS IN CASINO CRESCENT.

THE next fortnight in Casino Crescent was really a very happy time. It was a transfer of the best that had come into Estabel's recent life to a yet more congenial surrounding. It was one of the Gladmother's "moves" — the moves onward which are ordered and signified; in making which we take "the whole of us."

Aunt Esther went back to Stillwick on the Wednesday, but she was in Topthorpe again twice before school broke up and the Clymers sailed. Cousin Lucy craved her company, and much of her sound, encouraging advice.

Things were greatly altered for Miss Henslee, and plans were proposed that seemed so natural and fitting to immediate requirement and inclination, that she was only the more anxious to look well into all their bearings, and on into farther results, before consenting to present pleasantness and relief. That was Cousin Lucy's way, — to try to see all round, and before and after.

"You can't," Miss Charlock told her. "Your eyes can only take in just so far, and just so deep, and right straight along. They ain't telescopes, nor microscopes; nor, more than all, they ain't set in the back of your head. They're only meant for a piece at a time, and to see it plain."

Which greatly supported the gentle lady in her leaning to the ready, easy decision. It was settled that the brother and sister, with Harry, of course, belonging almost equally to both of them, should make their

summer home together at the Old Place, and spend the winters, in like manner, here in Tophthorpe.

"It will throw the young people a good deal together," said Miss Lucy, scrupulous to leave nothing unsuggested that should be thought of.

"Best possible arrangement," returned Mr. Henslee explicitly. "Propinquity does n't work all one way. Unsuitableness is as quick to find itself out as the other thing. All else being equal, let there be thorough opportunity, and ample time for the most complete understanding."

Miss Charlock said the same in effect differently.

"Shaking together won't make contrary ingreients mix; and you can't mix contraries by shaking 'em together. The more chance you give folks, the more they'll settle it for themselves."

From which bit of conversation it appeared that nothing in the family plan was risked blindly by the controlling powers; as plainly, also, that nothing in the ordinary possible contingency was to be dreaded.

No word of this had ever been breathed among them before; but in the converging of circumstance that which had lain latent in mind or event came thus far forth and was to this extent recognized.

Curiously, however, it occurred to none of them just now that more than two elements might be concerned in their experiment.

Harry was jubilant. Estabel was full of the happiest content. How beautifully everything was coming together! She reproached herself, indeed, with being too glad when kind Aunt Vera was going away. She not only went, as in duty bound after the semi-apology, to the house in Mount Street, ignoring impediment with a simple grace of generous tact, but she spared many busy hours there to help Aunt Vera, hearing her plans, and telling her of the Henslees' delightful arrangements, and of the happy summer she expected. Of the Hawtrees

she did not say much; she let the fact speak, that her happy time was to be largely so in making these simple friends glad likewise.

Mrs. Clymer saw excellent opportunity unfolding. Safe in Stillwick, with the Henslees at the Old Place, a summer might do much. She had a comfortable feeling of having played into the hands of Providence.

The evenings of these days in Casino Crescent were the nicest part of all. Dr. North had been asked to drop in, and although it was rather a long drop over from West Yarrow Street, he came. Mr. Henslee had found him thoroughly likable, and held out to him a cordially friendly hand. Ulick had a certain flickering doubt of his own wisdom, but justified it in saying to himself that a man was n't an ostrich; it was always best to see things as they were, and behave accordingly. He had great faith in his own strength to beat away whatever might in any sort threaten his manly freedom. Perhaps his secret instinct at this time was to test himself; to prove to himself how free, thus far, he really was. It would be an absurdity to allow that there was any reason for him not to go to the Crescent, and to see Estabel there a few times before their meetings should be all ended. He acknowledged to himself, as he had done from the beginning, that he was interested in the child; in her way of looking at things. It was new to find a new mind, unbent to social prejudice; but he still questioned — and he still chose to believe it the mainspring of his interest — how far the drift of a few years' more living would change her point of view.

Just now she was very eager to get a more direct light upon an order of things in which it seemed to her there was such unfairness, such an inequality of benefit where many were endeavoring together to one end, — one man having simply to put his hand in his pocket for the multiplying Fortunatus coin, and with that control the whole, so that back into his pocket again flowed the

unfailing increase, while the execution of all plan, the carrying into effect by skill and industry, was paid for with as little as possible, and as if with a grudge. "I should think everybody ought to make money, that helps," she said, "whether they put in money, or brains, or the 'wise-hearted work,' like the Children of Israel."

"Estabel always goes back as far as Exodus," said Harry, laughing.

"Don't we have to for the Commandments?" she demanded, and then they both laughed, as if they had a certain pleasure in their little oppositions, which might be less differences than understandings.

Dr. North quietly noted this, and drew this inference; it was part of his investigation.

"Money earns money," said Mr. Henslee. "That's the vital principle of finance. The able financier is the man who makes it make the most."

"It does n't seem as if it ought to get to be such a separate and overbearing thing," said Estabel. "I think work is really the first thing, and ought to be paid first — and best, if there is any difference."

"Somebody has worked to get the money; then he turns round and works with that, and the larger pay comes in with the larger power. It can't be helped. Money is motive force; then there has to be raw material, and machinery, and practical management, and skilled and common labor, all of which money commands. It is a great complication, and there are necessarily some hitches in all human affairs. Everything does n't always fall together or turn out as was expected, and every man is n't a right-angled, equilateral demonstration of conscience and judgment. Things have to shake down into such system as they can, and people must do the best they can in the conditions. The world might be better than it is, but it can't come all at once."

"What is a 'right-angled equilateral?' " asked Harry mischievously, thinking of triangles.

"Why, a square, of course," interposed Estabel, while Mr. Henslee, tripped suddenly by the imputed trip, said nothing.

"Thank you, Estabel. Harry, you had better rub up your geometry."

"Very nearly caught you, for all that," said Harry, dexterously turning the tables to his own recovery.

Estabel was not heeding any further. She had spoken with mechanical literalness. Her mind was busy with the first point in Mr. Henslee's proposition, the axiom with which his argument had started. She sat silent, thinking it over.

"Money earns money. Money is worth money." She supposed it was; she perceived that it did; but when people had enough besides — and yet, there came in the second link of the chain of reason. How did they get the "besides," but by the working of this very rule? Earn a little and make that earn more. Then double it up again.

She knew that was the way her Uncle Clymer had done, coming up from moderate, slow beginnings; that was all right; she could see no flaw in the line of process. But at the point of *enough* — there arose another and the real question, that she could not settle. The whole struggle of the world is to settle that, and it has never done it yet.

When Estabel did speak, it was to say a very simple thing.

"I suppose if the men at the top — the money end — of the line didn't want so much, there would be more to go all the way down."

The three gentlemen laughed, and the other two women looked up.

"That hits it," said Mr. Henslee. "That touches the mainspring. If you can persuade the men at the

top, Estabel, you will have solved the whole puzzle of political economy."

"If they never are persuaded, won't things grow worse and worse? Won't money pile up until a few people have everything, and run the whole world their own way?"

"That's the tendency. But to every strong tendency there is a reactionary force. Here and there, things are always righting themselves. Business crashes come, the cards are more or less shuffled, and there's a new deal."

"Is it a good plan to depend on crashes?"

Dr. North laughed. "'Après nous, le déluge,' " he quoted.

"That's horrid!" exclaimed Estabel, with quick comprehension.

"Nobody wants to be first to take down his bit of dam and empty his own little millpond. And dams there have to be, power concentrated to carry out use."

Mr. Henslee concentrated his phrasing, with his new illustration; it served him suitably.

"They let down gates, don't they, when the river's very high?" asked Estabel. "They don't want *all* the water in their own mills."

"Metaphors always come to an end," said Mr. Henslee, much amused. "And sometimes they work round to the opposite illustration. There is some check provided against any excess, as I said before."

"You said 'crashes.' Would n't it be better to regulate beforehand? If everybody would stop when they had got enough, and let somebody else have the good of the too much. That was what *I* said before." Estabel spoke very demurely and softly, but as quite surely and clearly, on her own part, returning to her point.

"We live in — *Tophorpe*. And *Tophorpe* — standing pretty fairly for all the other *thorpes* — is n't ready

to be decapitated. There are too many heads for one axe. You could n't persuade — or convince — *all* the men at the top, Estabel."

"Somebody will have to begin," she pursued, thoughtfully. "Maybe a good many that we don't know of are beginning, after all; and that's why only a few people are frightfully rich. I don't think it ought to be so much credit to anybody to have *heaps* of money. It would be better to have a rule of give-away, like that game of cards, Harry, we played the other night, when every trick you took beyond an average counted one against you."

"Such a game as that suits the poor hands best," Harry remarked.

"Of course, they get out of it the easiest. But the cleverness — the satisfaction — the thing we play for — is to work off the big cards so as not to be left with too many in our own pile."

Again there was a general laugh. "Utopia!" exclaimed Mr. Henslee.

"It ought to have been Utopia by this time, I think," Estabel replied to that; "if they had begun when they were first told about the two coats, and when they were shown how the seven loaves were enough to go round."

Nobody laughed then, or answered. "You certainly have the last word, now," said Dr. North. His eyes smiled upon her and he spoke gently.

"No. It was the first. And I don't see how there can be two different rules about it, or how it should be a law that water should find its own level, and money not."

"Wait till the money floods up your way," suggested Harry Henslee.

"I suppose I had better," Estabel acquiesced ingenuously. And the merry mockery in Harry's face gave place to a flash of proud pleasure.

"In the meantime, we'll play checkers," he said.

"And it shall be gobble-up or give-away, whichever you like best."

He brought the pretty inlaid table with its squares of ebony and pearl, and Dr. North got up and took his leave.

CHAPTER XLI.

MORNING SUNSHINE.

WE live in episodes. Life is a story, with sequel after sequel. But as each volume closes, we say "Finis," and think it is all told. We come to a climax, and the "ever after" takes its color and is summed up as inclusive consequence.

The young do this, especially. "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts;" but it is most apt to be so in mere extension of the present. *Now* is long; it projects itself into the future. Immediate surrounding seems almost impossible of break; it is the final solution of all preceding breaks and changes. Also, the now is deep; that way the young thought measures it with a long sounding line. It grasps a more interior, vital meaning than older earthly experience often can, in all that arrives to and affects it. Everything is intense with significance, quick with an instinct of perpetuity. "Your heart shall live forever;" youth believes it, and identifies its heart with present feeling and circumstance, making these eternal.

With Estabel everything seemed to have "turned out." They were all back in Stillwick; back there, having brought with them the gain of the absence and interruption. Her happy feeling about it found gleeful expression in the old rhyme she sang, as she moved briskly about Aunt Esther's rooms in the mornings, with duster and brush; not so much removing that which was scarcely suffered to rest or gather, as, accord-

ing to her own way of stating, "putting the polish on to things."

"I hate to dust real dust," she said; "but when there is n't any, it's so pleasant to feel it over and make sure."

So she went around, smiling and humming, and every now and then breaking out into the words of "Little Bo-Peep."

"She lost her sheep,
And did n't know where to find 'em;
So she let 'em alone, and they all came home,
And brought their tails behind 'em!"

The mornings lengthened toward midsummer. The sun grew hot upon the pastures; the woods were fragrant, the birds sang softly in their home content; it was so sweet and quiet in garden and orchard that the sounds of pick and hammer and the clank of iron a quarter of a mile away over the gravel ledge, where the railroad was being leveled and laid, only touched upon the margin of an undisturbed peace and accentuated it.

The Gladmother, in the two rooms that had been given her—those on the westerly side, of which the front one, that had been Estabel's, served her as a sitting-room, either being by itself too small for all her use and very constant occupation—was blessedly at home.

The two young girls had the two corresponding opposite chambers, and Aunt Esther established herself cheerfully in the bedroom behind the shop, "handy to housekeeping and trade," which she had only not occupied regularly before because she would not leave Estabel alone upstairs. As to further need, there was none. Since business and family had both enlarged, Miss Charlock had employed a woman of the village to come in for day service; resident assistance she would not have. "I should not feel as if my home was my own," she said.

So the broad, low roof of the little cottage covered them all in to a happy comfort, and there was no further immediate talk of "building on."

"They'd better see at first start that they can be here as well as not," Aunt Esther told Estabel. "Afterward we can have whatever we all take a notion to — that's consistent."

The Gladmother's dormer window, as the sun came round southward, took in the sifted, flickering shafts of light that shot through the changing spaces of the waving elm boughs, and flashed them into separated, dancing jewel rays through the dear refracting crystals, hung in the little alcove, that with its raised dais gave pleasant access for the dooryard outlook.

At the west side a gable window of comfortable dimension, whose blinds were thrown wide all the morning, and in the afternoon bowed out with primitive device of hook and staple, opened toward the field and garden intervals between the few near houses, and the farther bend of the roadway where it came round upon the bridge. Held in this loop of highway, and sloping to the river, clustered the green trees and mounds and white stones of the old Stillwick graveyard. The morning light lay beautiful upon them always, and at evening the rich sunset glow slanted through the boughs of fir and willow, and showed in far, clear spaces like calm lakes of heaven.

"The shining and the life are everywhere! They can't be got away from. There was never anybody dead!"

Lilian said it out of her own fresh joy, phrasing from her clairvoyant spirit that to which in the Gladmother's eyes it answered as she came into the room one still but buoyant-breathing morning with her usual loving inquiry and offered service, and found the gentle dame already dressed and sitting in her armchair by the open sash.

The girl had followed with quick glance the happy look, and overtook it where it rested upon the bright-bathed, white-gleaming groups of simple headstones that marked the places where they who through generations had peopled the busy, growing little town were gathered — children to fathers, fathers to children — in one small, green field.

Yes; the shining and the life were there also; the birds nested and sang in the safe inclosure; the grass waved, and the daisies bloomed; it was not a desert of the dead; death can nowhere assert itself; it is swallowed up in the victory of endless being.

White stones in the field for name and for remembrance, here; elsewhere, in the heart of the life whose great pulse beats out to the farthest reach of its gift in humblest initial form — the small white stone of the new name, and the new nourishing of the hidden manna.

“The glory of the Lord comes by the way of the East,” said the lovely old lady. “But it spreads away over. I don’t mind not having an east window; I like to look along the path of the sunrise, and see the lighting up. It all comes in here later, one side after the other, and makes the place splendid. But this is the beginning, so sweet and fresh and gentle. It is the waking up of the world; the promise that is new every day; the resurrection that goes round and round. ‘He turneth the shadow of death into the morning.’ No; there is n’t anybody dead. Not anybody has been put away out of it. They have only gone further into the glory; they are all awake, and they ‘walk in the light of the living.’ ‘Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.’ They are such company for me, Lilian — those people who have lived round here, and who are alive, more than they ever were. They tell me wonderful things. I never knew one of them, and yet I feel as if I knew them all.”

"And now you must have your breakfast," Lilian said. "And, oh, Gladmother! I've such a beautiful thought for a bonnet!"

"That, too, comes of the morning," answered the Gladmother with a smile. There was no forced transition for her, no incongruousness, either way. Nobody had ever to make solemn gap between words of world and other world for her. It was all one. She had promise of the now is, and of the is to come. It was all come. It was the kingdom at hand. That was her gospel.

So by and by Lilian brought up her pretty work, and sat with her while she finished it.

It was a bonnet of white chip. Inside the brim, which poked a little, was a narrow shirring of pale green crape, of which the frill behind was also made, with lining to each of fair, glistening silk. On the top, outside, between crown and brim, lay two half blown water lilies, resting among dark green pads that spread either way, lifting their curled edges that showed under sides of rose color. And from among them dropped the long ovals of smooth buds, just betraying a line of white between pink lips. The stems were coiled around the crown, and gathered at the back with a knot of satin ribbon, dark like the lily pads, blending and contrasting at once with the pale shimmer of the silk and crape.

"That is instead of the Alsatian bow," said Lilian, touching the graceful top-cluster with a little air of triumph. "It has the mechanical effect, and it means a great deal more."

"Do your customers appreciate?" asked the Gladmother.

"Why, yes — approximately. This has been spoken for already. It is for Miss Julia Thornil. She was here just now, before I came up. She wanted something cool and fresh for a garden party. I showed her what I was doing and had planned, and she was enchanted.

Really, it does just suit her, with her creamy-pale complexion and her sunny-colored hair. 'Don't make one for anybody else,' she said."

"And did you promise that?"

"Why, yes," said Lilian again, turning the bonnet on her little fist, and looking at it all about with demure satisfaction. "I told her that I never made two things alike; I tried to have a new idea for everybody, or else people would n't have any pleasure in admiring each other."

The Gladmother laughed. "Did she appreciate that?"

"I don't know. She only said she should think the ideas would give out sometimes. I told her, no, the world was full of them; and then I showed her what I had done for Dolly Payne, all in a drift of white, with white ribbons, and a bunch of rosy arbutus peeping up from out of the snow."

"You little witch! And then what?"

"She stared, and screamed. And presently she asked me if the pond lilies did n't look rather big and coarse in comparison. 'Well, if you *compare*,' I said; 'but you see we never think of that when pond lilies come; they each have their place and turn.' I did n't tell her that Dolly Payne was just as dainty and delicate, contrasted with her, as the mayflower is with the lilies. I don't think she would have understood how they could both be beautiful in their way, though they don't grow alike or together. I wish people would just take their selves as they are given to them, and be glad that there are other selves to finish out the lovely possibles. Gladmother! I'm going to make and paint some autumn leaves and some holly for Christmas, and snowdrops and buttercups for next spring, and poppies and sweet peas for summer, and — don't tell anybody! some hops and some potato blossoms! Do you know what a pretty pale lavender and gold they are?"

CHAPTER XLII.

MISSING.

THERE were only two discontents — and one of these was but an discontent — in those beautiful first summer months at Stillwick.

Harry Henslee, who with his father spent all his Sundays and holidays — these last including three weeks of vacation as he might choose to take them — at Henslee Place, and to whom the woodland path between that and the little village house was but an easy and most perfect link joining the two homes in the completeness and privileged isolation of one — found everything delightful save a single only circumstance, against which he openly and resentfully rebelled.

Why should Lilian Hawtree make bonnets?

Why should all Peaceport and half of Tophthorpe be hearing of her as the inspired little milliner, and demanding her inspirations for their dollars? Why should they take careless credit for having found her out, and ask each other, as the last little knowing password of an exclusive fashion, "Have you got a Hawtree?"

"It is detestable," he told Estabel.

"Why? Any more than if it were a Hawtree picture or a sculpture?"

"Because they put it on their heads, and admire their own taste and cleverness and setting off. Because they think they patronize her, and distinguish themselves, and that all she does it for is the money. Because she was n't made for that sort of thing. I wish you 'd put a stop to it."

"You know I can't. It's all between her and Aunt Esther. And it makes Lilian happy; and I think it is really beautiful. Don't be a snob, Harry."

"It is n't being a snob not to want her to pander to snobbery."

"She does n't." And then Estabel told him of Lilian's answer to Miss Thornil; and she quoted George Herbert. "Whatever she does, Harry, she 'makes that and the action fine.'"

"I'd rather she'd sweep rooms, though. She could keep that more to herself."

"She does n't want to keep anything to herself. That's the fineness. And I don't see what it is to you, Harry."

"Of course not. If it were at all my business, I should prevent it. That's why I have to ask you."

The discontent was Estabel's.

In her "ever after" there was still something wanting, though she paused in the immediate content, and perhaps knew not how to analyze it thoroughly, or to detect the insufficiency.

She missed something, not precisely conscious how much, or through what most vital need of her nature: a keen, direct, uncompromising judgment, external to her own, by which she had learned to measure herself, and things about her; a criticism, a difficult but possible approval, to which she involuntarily looked, out of which, even though sometimes against her will, she made motive; a presence that stimulated her, that she at once welcomed, stood on her defense before, honored, and feared.

Dr. North never came to Stillwick. Of course, he could not leave his patients. His life was there in Tophthorpe; summer and winter he went its round. Mr. Henslee had asked him to give himself a half holiday now and then, and run down to the Place. But the Place was off the track. It involved a drive from

Peaceport, and a sending him back to his return train, as had been offered. All this trouble it was not like Ulick North to take or give. And why should he come to Henslee Place? What was likely to be going on there that he could meddle with? His business, he thought, was to stay away.

Yet he, too, missed something that he had grown accustomed to, and that he did not like to accuse himself of missing. He said to himself that it all meant only broken habit. A man who has a routine, whose variations are but a side groove or two, feels uncomfortably an interruption or a shunting off. He has to take the pains of initiating some new opening or construction, or subside into a lessened round and order. This last was what Dr. North was doing.

The summer time made matters worse. "Summer was always dull," he said in accounting to himself. There were no oratorios; there was no acting that was worth while. Artists, singers, preachers even — everybody — all were off, resting, pleasuring. A poor doctor must just stick by. People were dying all the same; their souls might wait for saving, but their bodies could n't.

So he would take a stretch across Old Park, or walk down Clover Street to see the sunset across the river, and then back to his little rooms and a smoke. In these processes place was made for all the more querying and thinking. They tell us of unconscious cerebration. There are other organs — or forces that bodily organs typify — that work in secret and develop their results. All at once, when we think we have been idle or asleep, we wake and spring, to confront them full-formed and grown.

A thought occurred to our doctor one day, which suddenly reversed his mental attitude. He had been making it his business to stay away from Stillwick, as if against some hidden suspicion of himself of which he

would not face conviction; which he would disprove, rather, by a sort of negative evidence. Now, strolling slowly, thoughtfully, down Clover Street as the evening deepened after a hot, weary day, he came to the corner where he had found Estabel that day the carpenter had died.

He looked over to the windows she had watched. Gay curtains of turkey-red and cheap lace-muslin filled the casements where the ferns had been, and stirred in the slow air that drifted through the open sashes. A piano tinkled vulgarly.

And then the sudden thought struck him that shifted his point of view. Ought he not, at least once, have gone to Stillwick to learn how it fared with the good old lady, his friend and patient? What could it matter, as to that, who else was there — or what might be going on in the pleasant country life that young and old, so closely conjoined in their companionship, might there be living?

The negative needed proving on the other side.

Was he afraid of going and finding out?

He stopped under a street lamp, and pulled out his watch, as if it would tell him at what next hour a train would serve for Peaceport.

"To-morrow afternoon will do," he said, as he put it back again.

CHAPTER XLIII.

FATHER AND SON.

THE next day was Saturday.

The counting-house was to be closed early. It was, after a few busy forenoon hours, a leisure day for Mr. Henslee, and Harry shared its privilege. He shared most things with his father now.

For the last year, or nearly so, he had had a desk in that inner office where the elder Harrison Henslee had sat so many years alone, transacting the great business which had made his single name so strong.

The young man's apprenticeship with Blunt and Sterne was over. In October he would be twenty-one, and then the firm style here was to be changed to "Henslee and Henslee." The head of the house would not have it "Henslee and Son." The "son" was the private, personal, dear relationship. Before the world he wished his boy to stand, now that he was a full man, in a man's place, on an absolute level with himself. It should be Henslee and Henslee, until it had to be Harrison Henslee again; and he hoped that afterward there would be another boy who should have been bred up and waited for, in turn, to take place in like manner in the old, honored concern.

The elder Harrison Henslee was very happy this summer, in his looking forward to that which, so long planned, was now so near.

They were driving down together, through the sweet woods, and along the sea opens, to an early dinner at Henslee Place. They took the long road round by the north into Stillwick. They went leisurely, as was

pleasant both for men and beast; the two in the comfortable low buggy had plenty to say to each other in these long drives. The handsome creature in the shafts had his meditation and enjoyment; he threw up his head, and dilated his nostrils, taking in his share of the beauty and deliciousness of the way. He was a fine animal, capable of a moderate motion that was yet not lazy; he lifted his feet with clear elasticity, and put them down with vigorous purpose, whether his pace were measured to a slowed or accelerated time. He gave the sense of getting over the ground with unslackened intent, even if only on a walk. Behind such a horse, conversation or reflection may be complacently indulged in.

The ocean breeze swept inland for miles, making its cool fringe to the mantle of heat that lay upon the westward farms and gardens. In this border, up and down, people might travel, even at midday, with a comfort and refreshing keen and sweet.

"What is the programme for this afternoon? Down through the woods, as usual, eh?" asked Mr. Henslee.

"I believe so," answered Harry. "Estabel and I have agreed to go over the river, to the Big Rocks, to get some early goldenrod that grows in a place we know of in the Farnum pasture. Miss Hawtree wants it for copy."

I think Harry added this last bit for the sake of absolute frankness, perhaps even with himself. But then, frankness is sometimes the most effectual blind.

"I asked because I think I must have you back by five. MacLinn is coming over to look at the old shipyard property. I want you to see him. — Estabel Charlock is a fine girl, Harry. She shows it in this independent friendship of hers. She is a girl, too, who can carry her independence and compel countenance, if she is only given room for free action. I don't think she was exactly in her own best place in Mount Street."

"Perhaps not," Harry answered briefly. It was not precisely on this side of Estabel's character that he could be enthusiastic. Possibly Mr. Henslee touched it on this side purposely to incline it into its finest light.

And then, as if his brevity might be too marked, Harry added with a good-humored laugh, "Her own best place does n't seem to be quite easy to find. She's such an awful little radical, you know."

Was this tentative? How much of personal interest and question might it mean? Was her radicalism in Harry's way, possibly — or was she in her own light with him because of it?

"She is pretty apt, though, to be radically right," said Mr. Henslee.

"That's the worst of it. She can't wait, and she can't tolerate. I'm not finding fault with her, though. I should contradict anybody who did. She's high and grand."

Mr. Henslee could not altogether make him out. It occurred to him that perhaps the boy had not yet made himself out. He knew better than to hurry him. That would probably avail only to make him find himself out wrong. So he merely said, "All that will wear off — the intolerance, I mean. The high quality itself will take care of that. I like her, and I feel very sure of her."

He made a move to change the subject, mentioning MacLinn again. But Harry, rather curiously, followed up the other lead.

"Yes; *we* know her, and we like her," he said. "Other people would, perhaps, if she liked them. But she is queer and difficult. She despises society. That does n't do in Tophthorpe, you know."

He laughed, and gave a side glance at his father, as if covertly solicitous for the effect upon him of these words.

Again, Mr. Henslee could not be quite certain how

much, or in what sort and relation, this manner of the boy's might mean. But he returned glance and answer with entire directness. "Her elective instincts are keen," he said. "She will always choose the best, and never be satisfied otherwise. This makes her odd, at first, in her rejections and appropriations; but I will venture a prophecy that by and by — if her life has full chance — she will be a head and centre of some very marked social power."

"You have thought a good deal about her. I did not know you had noticed her so much."

Mr. Henslee laughed. "Old folks notice a great deal more — and look farther on — than young people imagine. We are given to projecting futures for them, and anticipating their probabilities, in the light of our own past. We put ourselves back to a starting-point like theirs, as we see it, and live on with them, as we think they might live on; perhaps with less allowance for miscarriage than our own mistakes would justify. Your Aunt Lucy is very fond of Estabel; she would like to claim a good deal of her if other rights did not come first. Now, especially. She wants to have her with us next winter. So I naturally think about her. I've always missed not having a daughter, Harry." And after a pause, he said, "I only hope that other aunt in Europe won't take it into her flighty head to send for her. I suppose we couldn't make any opposition to that."

And then Mr. Henslee did turn the conversation with excellent discretion.

The talk had been unpremeditated; but unpremeditated talk, like extemporaneous public speaking, grows out of much that has taken mental shape from pretty thorough preceding consideration. Just the very particulars had been touched that Mr. Henslee would have desired should be suggested, and this with an actual spontaneity which he would not invalidate by persistence.

He spoke energetically of the new business plans.

"We will build a line of vessels for our South American trade," he said; "light draught clippers for quick and frequent voyages; no long delays in lightering. We'll gradually replace our heavier old craft. That's my plan; and MacLinn is the right man for us. I can rely on him, and he knows that my work means his future. He shall take the ship-yard and build for us; we will have a branch house of our own down there; Fessenden shall go out to represent the firm; that will make up to him for not being taken in here. He understands, of course, that the first place has been kept for you, and yet he deserves promotion, and a share. So that will be all right; and — unless it should interfere undesirably otherwise — I think it might be well for you to go out for one voyage, and get the knowledge of the handling at that end. We shall have a good deal to think of, and to decide, for you — for both of us, together — this coming year. It will be an important time for you in every way. Your life will begin to take permanent shape. Much you must determine for yourself, but you may remember that I always stand ready to help you to the best, where it rests at all with me. I should like to see you settled early, Harry."

All this touched Harry strongly. "Us" — "our business" — the words expressed such generous pride and joy in sharing, in recognition of his son's manhood and bestowing upon him its rights — that an answering joy and pride, with an earnest gratitude, stirred the youth's spirit to the degree of a controlling desire to meet his father's wish in everything. At that moment it seemed to him that he could leave his life to such direction and foresight as grew from open-hearted love and wise experience like these. Harry Henslee's nature was one easily moulded to his environment. He was apt, in most things, to take his world as he found it,

and to find it pretty good. He certainly would never be comfortable in quarreling with it.

"We'll have a vessel on the stocks with little delay," said Mr. Henslee. "MacLinn has excellent notions for combining the best speed and capacity, and he will have everything to his hand. Another winter—but we won't look ahead as far as that quite yet. Be thinking of a name, Harry. A vessel's name is half her character at the start. It'll be fine to have a launching at the old place, won't it? We'll break a bottle of the best, boy!"

Mr. Henslee shook the reins, and imparted some superfluous impulse to the noble roadster, who shook his mane in response, and launched out on his own part valiantly.

Harry saw the look in his father's face that it wore when he was happily and proudly stirred. Eyes level-fronted, reaching into distance, luminous with a suffused moisture which the raised brows seemed lifted to restrain, lips curved and all but tremulous—the ambition, affection, fulfillment of heart purpose and desire, and the self-containing that kept all within calm, staid limit—it was the aspect in which the strength and tenderness of a beautiful manly nature met and were declared. There are looks which reveal more than word or act can demonstrate in years. At such moments Harry Henslee comprehended his father, and revered him passionately.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RULE OF THREE.

ONE day Miss Charlock had said to herself, considering things over, "Three's an odd number. Especially when it's two unusual nice girls, and one—well, ever-age nice—young man. I don't know as it ever occurred to me just so before. I hope to goodness I haven't been making any mistake. I was only thinking about two of 'em—as far forth as they concern each other much; it's time, I guess, to look out a little for number three—if I can tell which 't is. That's the one that gets left out. Number one takes care of itself, fast enough; and sometimes a person comes by particular circumstances to make a Scripture neighbor of number two; but—well, I never could cleverly master the rule of three—and a three-ply carpet always wears out in pockets—and—chooty-choo!" She gave her work a flirt, her scissors slid off her lap, and her spool rolled after them, unwinding as it went; compelling her to pursuit with many dives and twists under the legs of chairs and table and the hems of her own skirts, before she recovered thread and thought, and wound up and snipped off with, "After all, it's the holy number, and it ought to work right all the way down. Anyway, I'll go up and visit a little with the Gladmother."

And it was in this visit, while the odd number of young people were off together in one of their summer rambles, that Aunt Esther had managed to convey to the serene old lady some idea of unspoken family interest

and expectation, without, as she complacently reflected, "really saying anything."

It is the thing left unsaid that works its quiet way. The Gladmother kept Lilian by her side a little more; she managed to let her see — in that same shrewd carefulness of not saying — with what a gentle kindness she herself perceived some sign of beautiful story weaving in this summer life.

So Lilian also began, in her young, unsophisticated way, to look on, and to read the fairy tale and to dream the artless dream; to think how sweet life was, and might be, for those two; for any to whom was given such part in life-unfolding, such share in the wide blessedness that the whole world is made to breathe and tell of. It was the human story of the birds and flowers; she was glad in it, as she was in them, impersonally, forgetting herself. She did not put herself aside, for her self was nowhere. And yet it was in all; "having nothing, and yet possessing all things;" "meek, and so inheriting the earth." Lilian Hawtree was, as Harry Henslee had said of her from his first perception, "a new kind of a girl altogether."

"It was in good time," the wise Gladmother said to herself. "Now all is true and simple. All will go well."

It was just as Lilian might have refrained from any common appropriation of that which another might desire or prefer, that she withheld herself, now and then, from enjoyment that the three would naturally, perhaps, have taken together; she was sometimes busy when they proposed a walk; this also had claim, as well as color, of a duty. She was not here merely for a holiday time; she had her work. When she put this forward, Harry frowned and Estabel would often appeal to Aunt Esther. Aunt Esther would say, "Lilian knows what makes her most comfortable. If there looks to be a little bit of an ought one way, there's no

clear pleasure the other; and there's no satisfaction in going different, when you see a signboard that you think settles your track."

Yet she would not let Lilian be too conscientious; the signboards were never of her setting up. For the most part, matters were not conspicuously different from what they had been. This, truly, would not have been expedient.

It happened on the Saturday in question, when Harry came to the Charlock cottage, with only some two hours, and those of the earlier afternoon, at his command for the expedition, that Lilian was finishing the trimming of a bridal bonnet for the village lady who was to be a certain Mr. Job Chirple's third wife; and that afterward she was to read to her grandmother and Miss Esther in one of Miss Austen's stories, whose keenly simple humor and real-life delineations they were enjoying.

"Always some useless bother!" Harry protested impatiently. "I don't mean the reading; that might come later, and would n't interfere. But the third Mrs. Cut-and-come-again! How long will it take? Or are you going to begin on the next one?"

An outbreak of laughter from the three women surprised him. He had not thought he had been funny enough—or ridiculous enough—for that; and half minded to take fresh offense, he said so.

"Oh, it is n't you, in the least," explained Estabel. "It is old Miss Minks. She was here just now, and had just met the bridegroom-elect—or elective. If you could have heard her account of the conversation!"

Estabel transformed herself suddenly into Miss Minks. She drew her upper lip down over her teeth, set her head on one side, laid the palms of her hands across each other, with a little wavy movement up and down, and started off with her recital:

"Yes'm. I've seen him myself. I've had a pus'nal interview with him. He'd druv over to the village,

and was gittin' out at Babson's store. I had n't come across him before sense I heard the news, an' I improved the occasion. 'Well, Brother Chirple,' says I, very polite, 'so I hear you're goin' to tackle up in double harness once more.' 'Seems so,' says he. 'Some folks appear to have the luck of it.' 'Speaks well for the women,' says I; an' I told him he certainly was perseverin', an' I hoped it would last him out this time; 't would be terrible discouragin' if it was n't to. And then I observed that he'd had quite a checkered experience, marked off toler'ble reggler in black and white. 'Well, Miss Minks,' says he, quite solemn an' earnest, 'this 'ere is jest how it's bin with me. My first — there, I did set my very eyes by her. An' then my second — I liked *her*, real well, what I seen of her; but she only lived a year. An' now this one — she comes well recommended, an' I presume she'll do the best she can.' The poor man really seemed to open his mind right out, an' I've come straight here with it, so you may depend it's the whole, clear, honest truth, fust hand."

"I won't say another word in opposition to Mrs. Chirple-that-is-to-be's bonnet! She ought to have all possible alleviation!" declared Harry, with delighted glee.

"Miss Minks, we may as well be off."

They went away, apparently well satisfied, together.

It pleased Harry to get Estabel "down off her stilts." She was so bright and taking, when she would only condescend. In her amusing, imitative moods, there was no one like her.

But as the fun evaporated, the indignation reasserted itself.

"That she should work for such people! Mrs. Job Chirple's wedding rig!"

"You would n't mind if I made a bonnet for Mrs. Job Chirple."

"No. You would do it for the pleasure, and the kindness."

"So does Lilian."

"I'd rather her pleasure and kindness should n't be paid for — by Sal, Sue, and Polly!"

"Or by Aunt Esther? Lilian does n't depend much more directly on millinery than I do."

"But she expects to keep on with it. She's personally identified. She never will — it's next to impossible she should — get out of it."

"Providence finds easy ways out of impossibilities, sometimes. In the meanwhile, she is content and thankful. There's nothing to be ferocious about."

"Nor provoking."

"I meant that, too. So please leave off, and be agreeable. There must be something to talk about besides Job and his latter days."

As Estabel spoke she crossed the brook at its narrow bend below the orchard. There was one great stone in the middle. Two light, springing steps took her over with elastic, graceful ease; there had been no slightest need to wait for Harry's help.

Harry remembered with happy present contrast the reckless plunge and flounder of two years ago. Estabel also thought of it.

"Place aux dames, toujours!" cried Harry, alighting beside her from a bold standing jump that ignored the midway point of support.

"Especially when the messieurs can immediately prove the mereness of the courtesy by superior demonstration."

How quick and firm she had become in action and in repartee! He measured her against herself and saw that the brusque, blundering girl had grown into the clever, well-poised woman. If she would always be like this, and only this, — like the gay sunshine, piercing with its keen, delicate lances and their kindly quickening

into the common, heavy earth of every day, rather than the unsparing axe laid to the root of the trees!

Perhaps in the friendship of these two girls the best of each had found and modified the other's. There were times when he could hardly discern in either whether Lilian predominated, or Estabel.

In all this Harry Henslee was neither so utterly ignorant of himself, nor so weakly vacillating, as might appear.

He knew quite well what he wanted. The more Estabel grew to resemble and repeat Lilian, the better he liked her; if he could have put Lilian, just as she was, into Estabel's circumstance, he would have been completely satisfied. His restless effort was to reconcile the two into something which he could persuade himself was a fully complemented identity. Reversing the old song, he could have been delightfully content with either, had she possessed more of the charm or the condition of the other. As things were, he could not bring himself to wish either out of the comparison; together, they showed him, as by a stereoscopic view, a rounded and completed womanly nature; an adaptation, also, to a world in which are both externals and verities, but in which they seldom seemed to him to coincide.

Harry Henslee was at once impulsive and conventional. And as yet he only perceived in a dim and puzzled way what was so clear to Lilian's and the Glad-mother's single sight, — that it is only by a false and arbitrary wrenching apart that the life created one can ever be made a doubleness, and set in irreconcilable separateness and distance.

Estabel, shrewd and quick-witted, loyal to and jealous for Lilian, was sensitively perceptive of this contradictoriness in Harry as it touched her friend, and she took up her part accordingly.

She consented to much monopoly of Harry that she would otherwise have avoided or refused. I think she

felt as if she were holding a kind of protectorate until such time as a full and true development should place present fluctuating relations on a right and certain basis. Not that she acted as of any special or deliberate plan; she only discerned by intuition that matters were but in temporary assortment, and must be given time in which to adjust themselves. Possibly she went no further than her desire that Harry should take a right and noble view of Lilian and her position; assuredly she would not let Lilian herself be sought in intimate friendship, only to be made to feel later that between her and such friendship was the bar of her place and occupation. It did not seem to her fair that Harry should admire and like her only partly, or under any sort of protest; he must take her altogether and unconditionally, to be worthy of her regard at all.

"There can be no superior demonstration of a thing done perfectly — in its own proportion. You know you did that well."

There had been no appreciable gap between the sentences of their light talk. Our analytics represent no space; they are but the flash upon the unbroken outlines of occurrence.

"Thank you. I did n't try to do anything at all. It's a good thing to learn not to take your jump until you can virtually feel yourself on the other side. A cat measures a hole by her whiskers. I've done with plunging for points that I can't reach."

"Done with hope and ambition?"

"I did n't say that. I may get to the top of the hill over there, but it won't be in the next step, nor the next after. I'm finding out how fine it is to be content and comfortable along the way."

"One need n't always take the longest way round, though."

"See here, Harry. This brook is bound for the river — by and by, after it has taken all its pretty turn

through the woods. It does n't try to run over the ridge, though, right here."

"You're as sharp and pat as Susan Nipper, with your proverbs and comparisons."

"There is one particular proverb that I don't think has ever been properly applied, — 'Don't cross your bridge until you come to it.' It ought to be, 'Don't cross your river in a hurry before you come to your bridge.'"

"Nor give it up, and go back?"

"No, indeed. That's a faithless fraternity."

"*Fraternity?*"

"Yes. The other thing that you might do. That's how Miss Minks expresses it. We've got to turn this way for our bridge, Harry."

Standing upon it presently, they stopped beside the railing, looking up and down the reaches of the river.

"It seems a shame," said Estabel, "but I suppose it has to come."

The pretty natural embankment was all an upturned mass of earth and gravel. Stone sleepers were being laid where the brown footpath had wound along under the hill. A gang of men in red and blue and gray blouses and nondescript trousers were handling the heavy blocks with bar and pick, settling them into their rough parallels. The bushy border of the stream had been hacked away. The water-level was being utilized for human traffic, and the blackbirds and the phebes and the little warblers that hunted in the underbrush had been driven back, bewildered, from the pleasant tangle that had been all their own.

"Changes always spoil something," Estabel said. "We have to take what they bring, and make the more of what they leave."

"That's good sound sense," Harry agreed, as they turned to walk up the long pasture rise. "Do you know I'm getting awfully proud of you, Estabel?"

"Are n't you grateful that your life has been spared long enough?"

"More so, I guess, that it has n't needed to be spared longer. That *would* have convicted me of stupidity."

"I wonder what has quickened your intellect so suddenly on that particular point? There — there's the goldenrod!"

Below a sheltering boulder, full in the warm south sun, stood a lovely clump of the tall, strong stems, each flinging gayly from its tip its yellow gonfalon.

Estabel sat down upon the dry turf out of which they sprang. Harry stood beside her. "I've had a good talk with father, to-day," he said.

"Did he tell you?"

"What?"

"How well I had turned out."

"What made you think of that?"

"Were n't you answering my question? I understood you so. But perhaps it was my grasping vanity."

"He said better things of you than that. I think he talked more, almost, about you than of the new vessel."

"Tell me about the new vessel."

And then Harry recounted to her all the plans — that he knew of; the resuscitation of the old shipbuilding business at the Henslee yards; the opening and systematizing of a larger, more continuous South American trade; the tropical voyages, of which, now and then, he might make one, as supercargo and part owner; the partnership; the fine new craft that was to be designed and built and launched and off before the end of another year.

"And we have got to think of a name," he said. His face was all alight with pride and confident expectation. Life lay before the young fellow, as if he might gather to himself whatever and all he would from the bountiful outstretch of the future.

"I am very glad for you, Harry. I think your father is splendidly generous."

"He's the grandest old parent since — the Father of his country! I'd go back to the Patriarchs, but there was n't one of that lot could hold a candle to him! Now let's think up a name."

Estabel broke off a stem of the goldenrod, and held up its bright plume.

"This," she said.

Harry pulled off his hat and tossed it in the air.

"I believe you've hit it! Don't say it, though. Don't let's try the sound of it till we tell it to him!"

They gathered the sheaf of flame-touched blossoms, and went down homeward with them like torchbearers in a triumph.

CHAPTER XLV.

"WHAT DID HE COME HERE FOR?"

DR. NORTH, sitting with the Gladmother in her west window behind the bowed blinds, saw the two come diagonally up the slope together, skirting the farther line of the garden. He saw them quicken their steps as they approached the house, as if perceiving some one with a pleased surprise. Mr. Henslee came round by the side way and met them. They all stopped a moment full in view, but none of them looked up; they were all busy with one another. If they had glanced this way, they would scarcely have perceived the doctor. The slanting blind and his position in the shaded room, a little back from the Gladmother's chair, though giving him a ready outlook, shielded him from any probable notice.

Their voices came clearly up through the still air and the open window.

"I've just driven over to meet you," Mr. Henslee said to Harry. "The longest way round — on wheels — will be the shortest way home. And MacLinn is sure to be punctual."

"All right," was Harry's answer. It had a peculiarly glad ring in it, as if — it sounded to the doctor — other things just then might be opportunely right with him. "I'm ready. Just let me tell you that the name is settled — if you like it so. Estabel is to be godmother. She wants the vessel called the Golden-rod."

Estabel stood, happily flushing, between father and

son, the great gay bunch of nodding corymbs held before her, her eyes lifted with a shy inquiry in them to Mr. Henslee's face. Harry, for his part, wore a proud little tuft of the yellow tips in his buttonhole.

Was it all about the adoption of the name? And the name—and the long ramble together—and the gold-gathering, and the shy, happy look, and the wearing of a favor—did they mean nothing in their conjunction?

Was Dr. North to blame for the quick thought that other things might have been settled, or be very near it, giving significance of occasion to the choice and sponsorship?

He made haste to say some few words to Mrs. Trubin. But she was openly looking and listening, and did not reply. This, and the next words that Mr. Henslee said scarcely helped to weaken the impression.

"Estabel is apt to choose right," that gentleman was answering, with a pleased smile, and he touched the girl's shoulder caressingly.

"But do you like it?" she asked, still with that bright, wistful look seeking to his.

"Thoroughly. It will just exactly do. She shall be launched, if all goes well, within a year from now, and we'll have her dressed in her own flower, from stem to stern. It's a bright thought, and a happy emblem. Thank you, Estabel. We'll talk it over, name and all, another time. Now, Harry, we must go."

Was their present speech double?

The two men said their cordial good-bys, with a palpably *a rivederci* tone, and went away around the house together, to the east dooryard, whence Mr. Henslee had come. Estabel stood still a minute, looking after them. Then she walked a few steps the same way, and came in by the kitchen porch.

Perhaps it was a pity that Dr. North could not follow his observation of her further.

Through the open doors and passage, as she entered, she caught sight, suddenly, of that other horse and vehicle waiting at the gate, and at the same instant a voice reached her ears that startled her.

"*Well*," Dr. North was saying, in a prolonged, almost explosive way he had of uttering the word after a silence, "I suppose I ought to be off."

When Ulick North had most to keep in control or bid back within himself, he was most absolutely commonplace. His deep-breathed "*wells*" covered often an interval of withholden breathing. Doctors learn to be like that, probably.

He was on his feet when Estabel came into the room.

She approached him with glad eyes and outstretched hand. He thought it was the still brimming gladness that had begun from other cause.

His hand met hers with the old brief, limp touch. Then he turned and made some ordinary and rather irrelevant remark to Mrs. Trubin. He was rude; he knew it; but it was his heroic treatment of himself.

Estabel looked at him with a silent, sad surprise clouding suddenly over the brilliant eyes. Then a different flash shot from them, and she turned away.

"I will go and put your goldenrod in water," she said to Lilian, who had come in quietly.

"Why should she pass it over ostentatiously to her?" darted with fresh circumstantial of false evidence through Ulick's mind. He might have detected himself if he had not so done before, by this very grasping of "confirmation strong." "Trifles light as air" convict reflexively.

Estabel had left the room.

The next moment her voice came hurriedly up from below. "Dr. North! Your horse!" she cried.

She stepped back quickly from the stairfoot as he came springing down. Then, as quickly, she followed him out into the dooryard.

The horse had been secured by the tie-rein to a rude tethering-stone that had lain in the grass beside the Charlock gate for years unmoved. It was a fragment of a broken grindstone, apparently, a portion of its original central perforation showing in the irregular outline of the fracture. Into its solid mass a staple had been drilled and a ring fixed. Bedded in the low bank outside the fence, it had seemed as immovable as the outcrop of a granite ledge.

But by some start or restlessness of the animal now made fast to it, it had become dislodged and had rolled down under his feet. The rein was too short; a frightened jump dragged the weight from the ground; it hung by the bit and dangled dangerously against the horse's knees. Naturally, he reared high up; the stone swung in the air, and vibrated back and forth. A catastrophe was imminent.

Dr. North made his swift way through the gate and to the horse's farther side. He spoke to him reassuringly; he reached his hand to the bridle and tried to seize it as the creature again and again came down from his upward leaps. But it was wrenched from his hold.

A girl with a white face stood on the mound made by the old elm roots behind the fence.

"Turn him this way if you can, Dr. North!" she called clearly but not sharply. And either by Ulick's more successful effort at the moment, and a throwing of his whole force in that direction, — his most anxious purpose being to prevent a bolt, — or by the horse swerving from the resolute restraint, the forelegs did descend upon the slant of turf in alarming nearness to the slight picket rail over which Estabel leaned; and the ugly bulk of rock dropped once more upon the top of the narrow embankment. Instantly she reached over and held fast upon the tie-rein with both hands, bracing her feet against the big protruding root of the old tree.

Dr. North, in the instant's advantage, secured his own grasp on each side of the bit, and the danger was over.

Estabel quietly unbuckled the strap from the iron ring.

"You did that well," the doctor said to her, as breath and tranquillity returned.

It was the second time the same words had been said to her that day. Same words sometimes sound very strange.

"Why did n't you stand still and scream?" asked the doctor, as he patted the horse's nose, and felt the head straps and unhooked the tie-rein from the bit. He made the little mock as one who avoids any giving way to emotional expression.

Estabel, waiting only for a moment to be certain of controlled movement before making her retreat, took the cue.

"Are you speaking to the horse?" she inquired nonchalantly, "or was that what you expected me to do? Perhaps we might try it all over again, and manage more *en règle*." And with that she began to walk away toward the house. But her knees trembled, and she had to stop, with a very determined effort to stand firm.

"Had n't you better tie him to the fence and come in again?" she asked to cover her own pause.

"No. You must say good-by for me. I can't leave him now."

"Very well; but you can't leave your hat." And now she compelled herself with a strong, swift step, and reached the door. Lilian stood there.

"You brave, brave thing!" she said.

"Hush! There's the doctor's hat. Give it to him, please." And up the stairs went Estabel, and into her own room and shut the door.

She sat down upon her bedside; she must put herself somewhere, and she would take no prone, vanquished posture.

"What did he come here for?" she demanded of herself with stern, unspoken words; lifting up, as against a challenge, her proud, hot face, overspread with indignation, shame, and the refusal of importunate tears. "To take back all his little bits of kindness? To let me see — as if I needed — how little he has ever thought of me at all — how he despises me?"

Lilian knocked at the door. "Don't you need something, dear? Aren't you feeling faint or weak, after it all?"

"No, Lil, thank you," came back a quite calm voice. "I'm all right. I don't need anything. I'm *very* strong, you know."

Then she got up, smoothed her rumpled hair, and began to act up to her conviction of herself.

Dr. North, driving back to Peaceport by the long shore road, faced the assumed fact unflinchingly.

"She will take the easy way," he said. "They all do. They all 'wed the Earlie's son' — if they can get him — or the market gardener." And he smiled with a pitiless derision at his own grim Swivellerism.

Here were two persons, true to severity in nature and habit, dealing untruly with themselves and each other, because acting, not from heart-centre, but from external phase and impression. It is in the outside of ourselves, and of life, that we make mistakes. Against the vivid, interior light we let down a veil, secrete ourselves, and misjudge the neighbor. So we walk in the old "vain shadow, disquieting ourselves in vain."

The most terrible misplacements and wrenches in human history and relation come not from adverse, inimical plot and crafty machination, but from our own putting of ourselves out of true alignment and poise — seeing and moving from false focus and balance.

And it is they who are most essentially real who suffer most.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"DR. NORTH IS A FINE MAN."

"DR. NORTH is a fine man," said the Gladmother.

With all her other-worldliness, which was really her one-worldliness, and with all her simplicity so utterly clear of guile, she could approach a subject in which she felt a dawning interest or solicitude with as much gradual caution as any wily diplomat. This was of her absolute truth, indeed; such truth being of a finer discretion than any vulgar cunning knows. Because thought and interest were in the dawn with her, she brought her word to bear with a corresponding delicacy of inquest. Because all was in a twilight of disclosure, she would light no flaring torch to flout the day with coarse anticipation.

She had no least intent to meddle; she did not even try to guess how much there was to meddle with. She only saw that something was at work that might at least hinder friendship unfairly; and such hindrance and unfairness should not be in the way of any right and natural ordering of event or relation. All must have the Lord's free chance; for she knew that the Divine working waits on human loyalty and willingness. To make a straight path is only to prepare His way.

Mrs. Trubin and Estabel were sitting together under the canopy of the elms in the little dooryard. The Gladmother loved the pleasant place, and after the sun had turned a little westward and the early dinner was over, she would often sit in the deep basket chair they put there for her, with her feet upon a soft old rug, and

the green shadows falling about her, while the air was yet warm and rich with lingering midday fervor, and stay until the later cooling of the afternoon. One or both of the girls would keep her company; oftenest it was Estabel, who read to her some pleasant old romance or beautiful poem, or asked her questions about real life and its meanings.

"Every life is a story," the old lady would say. "That's why I like stories. It seems to me that in the heart-world they read our stories as we read those in books, and live them with us, and know how it is going to be all right with us when we have turned over a few more leaves. And there's a poem-secret in everybody and in everything; that's why I like poetry. It tells the secrets, and leaves us to understand each one our own."

It was only a few days after Dr. North's visit, and it had been with a little determination that Estabel, finding that it fell to her to-day to keep company with the Gladmother, had followed her with cushions and book, and established herself with her as usual. There was a reminder here that she shrank from, and therefore braved.

And it was by this reminder that her old friend found it natural to speak.

The first word was a reference to what had happened that other afternoon; the torn turf outside the paling still showed traces of the brief, wild struggle; the mound about the ancient roots which had given Estabel at once her vantage and her peril, was the very one against which she now leaned, sitting upon the warm ground beside the Gladmother's chair.

"I saw it all, you know, from my front window; and Lilian was in the doorway. It was frightful, for a minute. I don't think either of us breathed, but it was soon bravely over."

Mrs. Trubin glanced at Estabel's face. Its color

had changed suddenly. But it was not to the paleness that the recollection of that moment's fear and desperate effort might have caused; it was a quick flush, and there was the lifting of the chin in the girl's proud way, that meant scorn of any kind of daunting consciousness.

"Dr. North must have been surprised that there were three of us who had n't the presence of mind to do the prescribed thing," Estabel replied, in a deliberate, disdainful monotone.

"My dear?" That was the Gladmother's way of asking explanation. Her eyes questioned mildly over her spectacles.

"That we did n't all scream. It was what he had expected. Shall we go on with 'Persuasion,' Gladmother?"

"If you please. It is better, I think, than 'Pride and Prejudice,'" the old lady answered with quaint humor, letting her eyes return to her work through the proper centre of her glasses.

And then, while Estabel turned over the leaves to find the place, she made that casual remark as she changed her knitting needles and drew out a comfortable length of yarn, —

"Dr. North is a fine man."

"I suppose he is," Estabel answered shortly.

"Not more than 'suppose'?" The Gladmother's smile was lenient.

Estabel let the book fall back upon her knee, with her finger in it at the right page. She perceived that the Gladmother meant to talk a little, and she yielded to her intention, not only from loving courtesy, but knowing how apt — how almost certain — the wise woman's words were to bear some comfort with them.

"I have not found out exactly how to suppose about Dr. North," she said, with an air of cool discussion.

"I know some things about him, and they are the fine

things. But I don't always understand the way he behaves."

"Do we do that with anybody? Perhaps he does not always understand the way — other folks — behave. People don't invariably *behave themselves* — though that's the common thing to say and expect."

"That's exactly what I mean. Dr. North does not behave himself. He puts himself away out of sight, and behaves something different."

"Do you never do that?"

Estabel considered the question. "I dare say I do," she answered, after the moment's pause. "I dare say he does n't understand me. And I think it very likely that he never will."

This touched the case in point. The Gladmother could speak to a definite intent, though still carefully in the abstract.

"All the misunderstandings and mistakes in the world," she said, "are in the behaving. If people only knew how to get behind that, into the real person, we should live like the angels. We don't get really inside ourselves, even, into the closet of us, where the Lord tells us to go in and shut the door, and speak to Him. We act in a hurry, on the outside, according to the way things touch us, and people seem. We even say our prayers outside. It's the reason of all the wickedness and the pain and the trouble. There is n't any miserableness nor any sin, *way in*. There's a safe and secret place there, where the Lord waits with us, and has mercy on us. We must just live out from that, and the open things will be made all right. If we knew ourselves that way, we should come to know our neighbor so, and it would be easy to keep the Second Great Commandment."

"But certainly, Gladmother, we have to meet things and people as we find them; as they choose — the people, I mean — to show themselves to us. There's an

outside even to character and spirit. We are not disembodied yet; and it seems as if there were more than one body to be gotten rid of before we shall be."

"That's as true as can be. But the way to get beyond all the bodily wrappings and hindrances is to get behind them; to believe behind them, of ourselves and everybody else."

"It does n't seem as if we always had the right. It's like listening and prying, when people shut their doors."

"But if a door has once been open, we are not bound to forget what we have been shown within. We are bound to *remember* it, and to set it against any outside roughness or poorness or plainness or even ugliness. We are told that some time we shall see 'the King in his beauty.' I think the King's beauty is in the deep heart of every human creature, and is what is going to be brought out, in different patterns and images, in every human creature's everlasting life."

The Gladmother folded her hands in that attitude of rest they took when her soul rested in some clear word of certainty.

"Believe in the very best you can get a glimpse of in other people. Call it *them*, and the other things accidents. And find out the real true best in yourself, and behave from that. There are n't many snarls, even in this world-tangle, that won't unravel that way."

"It sounds beautiful," said Estabel; "but it seems to make everybody just alike. Some people must be more or better for us than others, and we have to choose and love our friends because of their moreness and betterness. I should not wish to give up that."

"Did I say 'just alike'? No, indeed. Every one has an own special muchness and betterness, and there's a special measure of fitness one with another. That is what settles friendships, and all our belonging — in this world and in the world this tells of. But we are never

to measure worseness against betterness, nor forget the best — that we are or know of — because of some small contradiction that we may not understand."

The Gladmother knew very well that she had simply given Estabel a principle; that a principle is not a bias, and that a true principle can never work untruly. The girl might easily apply it in more than one direction; that rested with the essential fitness of things; no harm could come of a frank justice or a generous allowance; these, and only these, might spare, and perhaps rectify, much that ought not to be unconcernedly passed by and left to trouble or perplex. It is the truth that makes free. Elder experience can do more against young mistake by inspiring that to which itself has ripened, than by remonstrating against any imminent particular mistake.

And no seed of truth was lost in Estabel's honest and truth-desiring mind. She was comforted, in a degree — strengthened against immediate irritation and despondence — by the Gladmother's wise words.

Some time everybody would understand everybody; perhaps she had not been wholly sure and fair, in all her own thought, to anybody; if she could mistake, why should she expect not to be mistaken? If it were only mistake — why, that was not real, bitter dislike, nor contempt, nor unkindness; and mistake would finally prove itself. There was ever so much life to live; she would hold fast, as the Gladmother said, to the best she had, and knew, and wait for the more, that in some way and form must come, since there was really nothing — and no one — in which or whom there was not a best to come at last into full light.

But why did not the Gladmother talk to Dr. North?

The time — and way — perhaps the clear reason — had not yet come. She did her day's errand, and there left it.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOLIDAYS IN THE CRESCENT.

EVERYBODY was a year older. Midsummer had come and passed again. The intervening months, though full of day to day interest and occupation, had gone by, for the most part, without marked event. It is in the still times, nevertheless, that events ripen. The winter that had made seeming pause and silence in the earth had not been more surely quick with process out of which the summer revelation should come, than this interval in the simple affairs with which we have to do had been busy in maturing force and preparing circumstance for all that was in near sequence to follow.

Within the little round of ordinary happening, motive had been shaping, influence had been bearing upon mind and act, perceptions had been deepening and widening — changing, as things must change in all such progress toward defining. A whole inner experience, but half known or suspected by each of each, had had its separate, individual, yet mutually related growth in the lives that make our story.

The keel of the Goldenrod had been laid on Harry Henslee's twenty-first birthday. Through the favoring weather of the remaining autumn weeks the work had been advanced, and all winter long the shipyard had been busy with detailed labor on the many parts, and the gradual rearing into shape of the noble construction. There was no hurrying; spring and summer were to come, when all would be alive with a multiplied and incessant activity toward completion. The great timbers

got thorough seasoning through wet and dry, even while they were bent to place in the majestic skeleton of what was to be perfected into a living thing. Something like this, perhaps — this slow forming of essential frame in a sure strength that shall be guarantee of safety for all superstructure — goes on in the times when little, noticeably, seems to be urging toward the finished achievement of our human destiny.

A winter in town is, of course, not a shut-up, inactive season to people who can choose pursuits and command opportunity. There was society, plenty of it, both in a refined quietness and in occasional gayeties; gay, because they were in those times occasional, and not six a day. There was always public entertainment, — music, plays, readings, charitable sales, and shows. Something was always going on, though the whole public was not everywhere at once.

Estabel made a long visit in Casino Crescent, and was in the midst and reach of all, sharing in it at her own pleasure. What Miss Henslee did not do outside, the Brithwaites welcomed her to do with them. She was very differently placed from the schoolgirl of a year or two ago. She saw things from a new point of view. She realized that there was a society of which that which had offended and rejected her was only the sham, however nearly circles might from mere circumstance touch or temporarily coincide. There was a spirit above any mean distinction or exclusion, and yet careful by inherent delicacy in individual discrimination. There was no "keeping out," nor "getting in;" the right elements drew together, and that was all there was about it.

There was a gentle tact that appeared in arrangement by which any one a little exceptionally chosen should be brought into no possible uncordial contact, but by quiet degrees be drawn forward instead to such congenial appreciation that gradually nothing exceptional remained,

unless it were the position of such as might have held aloof at first, and found themselves self-relegated to remoteness at the last.

This was naturally more evident where a wise, kind management controlled. Young people could not form their world; they found it ready made, and accepted or refused accordingly. There was conventionalism enough, even here, to make the tact just spoken of a necessity in dealing with it.

At Christmas time the whole Stillwick household had been invited in to keep the holiday. A close carriage, with foot warmer and rugs, had brought the Gladmother comfortably from door to door; and for a bright, happy home week she and Lilian had occupied the large and little front rooms overlooking the wide, open Crescent, and here again the south sunshine poured in through the carefully suspended prisms that, whatever else might be dispensed with, were never left behind; and the farthest spaces of the stately old apartment were filled with tender touches of the light in every place the same, and in every place a revelation of the same infinite gladness and glory.

This holiday time had given Estabel the beginning of certain new insights which were to be clue and suggestion to much after thinking and doing. It is this after thinking which we shall have to follow to the after act.

For one thing, as the weeks went on, she could not help perceiving how she herself was growing to be more and more regarded in the Henslee family. Mr. Henslee treated her as a daughter; Aunt Lucy was what Aunt Lucy had always been, only with a stronger assuredness, a more settled conclusion. It became plain to Estabel that they looked upon her as quite belonging to themselves. Why was it? Was she so independently dear to them, or did it mean something more? Was anything going to be expected of her? She felt a something in the air; she hardly knew whether it

exhilarated or depressed her. She was happy, and yet she was half afraid.

Harry was the same old, frank, bright, kindly comrade. Brighter and more kindly, if possible, than ever, in certain ways. He seemed sometimes to purposely make the most of their mutually intimate relation; to come to her with communications and questions about his own affairs; to test, almost, how far and how much their reciprocal sympathy and help might reach. He looked at her sometimes, as if he were considering, measuring; but then that had always been his way; certainly, he had always been solicitous for her to show her best and claim her utmost, according to his idea of best and utmost. If she ever failed, it aggrieved him personally; when she succeeded, he was proud with a kind of possessive pride. Surely that was no common interest and regard. And now there was often a kind of glad expression, as of a satisfied triumph, both in his look and speech, as he observed her. But what was this a triumph over? What uncertainty was now and then appeased? And when would he have done appraising her?

What did he want? What did they all want? What did she herself want?

Something she could never have, perhaps. Something that could never, altogether, be found or gained in any human combination of character or event.

She had a dream, but it did not seem like a whole dream. The elements of a round reality were not all there. There was an opposition, a contradiction. Where there was a grand, unswerving righteousness of nature, there was a hard, unfair, unwilling self-presentation. Where there was easy, pleasant conformity, there was an inward something of strength apparently lacking. Which, after all, was the most real? Was it only that she liked the difficult, coveted the withheld? Might not hardness, in a certain way, indeed,

be weakness, and the most gentle, generous, happy demonstration come from the entire harmony that is strongest of all?

She had talked with Lilian Hawtree one day about Harry Henslee.

"If he would only be a little bit superior to — things," she said.

"I don't think you are quite fair to him," Lilian had answered. "I think you are too much given to theory, and admire it too much in stiffly theoretical people. It seems to me that a life full of brightness and kindness to everybody is the best outcome of theory, and that some persons live that way without much theory at all. Mr. Harry Henslee does n't trouble so much about what he does things for, as how he can do the most to make everything nice for everybody. Does n't that work out, in the end, to quite the same — or to more of it — as a fierce insisting upon reasons why, and a settling of how all the world ought to be put to rights? Is n't it the way of the leaven?"

And then Estabel was reminded of the Gladmother's word of the Lord's inner place with every one, out of which the life flows.

Did Lilian see deeper than she, with all her searching and analysis, could find out? How had she made so sure of this nobler solution of Harry's easy, adaptable *bonhomie*?

And how her face had lighted, while she vindicated him!

Yet still, Estabel knew within herself, without confession, that a courteous greeting from Ulick North — his coming to her side for a moment, perhaps, in a crowded hall, between the numbers of a concert recital, — a lifting of his hat to her with a smile in the street — was more to her than all Harry Henslee's daily, kindly assiduities.

It was without confession. She thought she com-

pared abstractly. But she still wished for Harry something more of that uncompromising strength which made concession rare and beautiful.

Ought she to look behind the manner with him, and believe in the strong source of the sweetness?

Might the sweetness and the peace of her own life depend upon it?

She had already taught herself, through the Gladmother's lesson, to look behind the roughness to the possible gentleness in Ulick North. Perhaps she was more than willing so to look, that she might escape the pain of the roughness. But she had not thought, until Lilian said it, of so looking to find a hidden force in Harry Henslee. To her mind this was something very like Samson's riddle.

The relation between Dr. North and herself was now that of a sufficiently gracious, well-mannered acquaintanceship. He met her accidentally; he came to the Crescent once in a while. He had, on his part, dismissed unreasonable resentment; he would not betray himself—to himself—by that; but he was cautious of reminder and recurrence. He relinquished her, apparently, to those who had such earlier and better right. The intimacy of Mount Street, where a common kinship and connection had made them as of one family, was all over. Evidently, Estabel thought, he did not care to have such days back again. And she—well, she could do without them.

Without doubt, she was just where many a girl decides between that which her nature craves and that which offers; and takes, as Ulick North had expressed it to himself in cynical forecast for her, "the easy way."

One thing had occurred in the early spring at which Estabel was simply and instantly indignant, without pause to ask herself or Harry whether it might be differently understood than on the face of it.

Estabel had been at her home in Stillwick since the middle of January; she would not stay altogether away, even where it was almost as much home to her, and where, in every possible way, she was persuaded to feel so. But early in March she came again. They wanted her, they said, for ever so many plans. Harry—who might have been an artist if he had not been born and trained to be a merchant, and in whose hand a pencil moved like that of a spiritually controlled planchette, to any little illustration of the thought or whim of the moment—was to make a design for the figurehead of the Goldenrod, and wanted Estabel's ideas and counsel. Also, Easter fell early this year, and Mr. Henslee and his sister had determined to open their house for a somewhat general party. Of course, Estabel must be there for that, and a quiet time previously would be needed for the other affairs. There were plenty of reasons, and there was really no reason why not; so she came.

It was when the immediate arrangements for the entertainment were under consideration, and the invitation list in final discussion, that the offense to Estabel arose. But that was not until nearly three weeks from her arrival, three weeks in which there had been so much that was interesting and happy and successful that it would hardly seem possible any even momentary break should disturb such established serenity.

Estabel had at once proposed the subject for the figurehead, — a girl, stepping forward, the lap of her gown gathered up in one hand, out of which drooped, as from a cornucopia, a light, splendid sheaf of golden blossoms that were to be veritably richly gilded in the carving; and in the other hand held forth and up, with gesture of infinite spirit, a tall cluster of the same for ensign and augury. This was to be the stately and jubilant gracing of the prow of the Goldenrod, bound for the "Golden South Americas."

Harry had sketched it rapidly at first; then he carefully worked out a copy in detail. When it was done, they all exclaimed joyfully at its beauty.

"You have made it look like" — Estabel said suddenly; then checking herself, "somebody I certainly have seen," she added warily. She had caught a swift expression of annoyed consciousness in Harry's face. Then she knew that he had more or less designedly made it look like Lilian.

"I have made it look as much as I found possible like the prettiest woman's face I could compound from all the loveliest impressions I have ever got. I dare say it looks like somebody — like several somebodies," he answered coolly.

But this was not what angered Estabel. She only put it away among other recent ponderings. We are coming to what did affront her.

It was over the invitation list, and the making of Aunt Lucy's programme for the important evening, and her memoranda of things and service to be needed.

"You will want a 'german,' I suppose?" she said to Harry.

"Why, of course, auntie! It would n't wind up at all without a german."

"It used to be the Virginia Reel," said Aunt Lucy.

"It's the german now; and the party won't stop without it."

"Certainly, then, it will have to be; we don't propose to give up the rest of our lives to the function. And if 'german,' then favors. You'll have to favor me with all the necessary information. I have n't an idea what to get, or to what extent."

"Oh," said Estabel, "there's where we need Lilian. She could contrive favors beautifully. She's full of invention, and her execution keeps up with it. You can't imagine anything — pretty and good — that she can't do."

"Why should n't she be here for the whole time? I wonder why I had n't thought," said kind Aunt Lucy.

Harry's face took expression of as decided, although different, disconcertedness as it had worn on occasion of the figurehead impeachment.

"She would n't like that, at all," he said quickly.

"It is n't in her line. She does n't dance the german."

"How do you know?" flashed out Estabel. "Have n't I just said there's nothing she can't do?"

"Well, she sha'n't come here and decorate, and then sit and decorate a corner herself the whole evening. And that's what it would be."

"Harry! I'm ashamed of you! Lilian is lovely down at Stillwick; and she'll do — anonymously — to decorate" — but there, again, Estabel had the magnanimity, in the midst of her displeasure, to stop; "but you don't think she'll do here in the Crescent, at a tony party! I've a great mind to go right home myself."

And with that she swept forth past him, out of the room.

"I don't think Estabel understands," said Aunt Lucy.

"I don't think I shall take the trouble to make her," Harry replied loftily.

Whether or not it came to her, as explanations after the fact do come, that it might be partly, at least, on Lilian's own account that Harry had objected, the little breeze blew over, and Estabel said no more. Harry's dignified silence on the point may have suggested to her a conscious sense of justification on his part, that would not condescend to ask justification from her. And possibly she may have guessed a little more, once on the trail, of that which might be the truth. What she had in the old time — a year or two back is old time with the young — regarded as his bit of snobbishness in her own case, might have been a touchiness for, rather

than against her; a sensitiveness, through a really generous sympathy, to what she might have to encounter.

But would he be brave enough to carry out this generosity of feeling to a full generosity of act? Was he, or was he not, inseparably a part of the world as he knew it, irretrievably committed to its judgment, of whose judgment he was afraid in behalf of those for whom he personally cared?

She could not answer these questions yet. She tried to give him the benefit of the doubt.

So she was kind to him again with something like an apologetic kindness, though she could not, from a full persuasion, offer him the frank amend of words. She could not go to him — as it would have been her honest nature to do — with, "Harry, I take back what I said; I believe I was mistaken." She might, after all, have to take that back.

Harry accepted the tacit apology; he would have hated an open one; he supposed she had had the sense, on reflection, to see for herself. Besides, it was not easy for him to maintain displeasure with anybody; with Estabel, and under his father's loving observation of them both, it was impossible.

Another thing that Estabel did not fully comprehend was the strong affection for this "grandest old parent," which could not only shape Harry's course to Mr. Henslee's desire, but even effectually stand in the way of what might otherwise have been his own. If he ever put it to himself in words that a new power of love was gaining possession of him, which was giving this "new kind of girl altogether" the real dominance in his life, he would, up to this time at least, have thrust it aside with the consideration, "It would disappoint my father so."

Miss Henslee ceased to be disturbed. She thought she saw that all had been made right again between the two; such little ups and downs were characteristic of the

very circumstances she wished for; a certain intolerance of fault was surest evidence of intimate personal concern; one is only minutely critical of quality where one is making important choice for one's self.

The Eastertide party came off bravely; the best of Topthorpe was there, old and young, rejoicing that the fine old mansion was again brilliantly thrown open to social amenities and delights; and Estabel was a centre here, receiving honors paid, perhaps, as much prospectively as to her undoubted present personal deserving, which people seemed all at once not slow to discover.

It was pleasure to her; no young girl can resist the charm of a cordiality which confesses her charming. But it did not hold all possible gladness for her; there was a part of her which was not satisfied nor touched — something that still waited, as it had waited all her life.

Nothing more had been said about Lilian; it had been wiser, even kinder, so. Estabel, out of her own experience, could feel keen jealousy for her friend, and she blamed nobody, although she missed her. But for intense happiness, a summer morning in the woods by the river together — a bright day at Henslee Place — such an hour as they had had once in the wonderful Hall of Plants — either of these would have been more than worth all this.

Of something yet beyond — a companionship and sympathy yet higher and profounder, that she might grow to and have given her in the great, rich giving of an enlarging and wholly answering life — of this her thought was vague, but the inceptive imagination and yearning were within her; they were the hidden promise that made it lovely, and yet a lovely hazard, to live on.

Dr. North declined his invitation to the party; he did not go a-frolicking, he said. But he made a proper evening call afterward, and behaved with a kindly amiability that was evidently intended, and was graciously received as due acknowledgment.

After that, Estabel had gone home. She carried with her a quiet, happy recollection of the later, tranquil evening. The dance and its excitement dropped back into the past.

Dr. North had been at his best and nicest. It was so necessary for her to think well of anybody whom she liked.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"WE UNDERSTAND."

WE will go on from the point at which we paused to glance backward, that we might see what the intervening time had done to determine the individual bearing and relation of our little group of friends, before following the further line of incident in their simple lives.

Summer had come round again; they were all a year older. That statement involved the rapid retrospect. One cannot wholly skip a year, even in trying to consolidate a history; for history makes, silently, all the time.

We have not particularized in regard to Lilian Hawtree; we can take her up at any point, and find herself and her position, as we find the North Star and its aspect, always in the same heavenly and earthly relation. Her life was so largely and truly in the life of others — not so much in self-abnegation as by a divine capacity for entering in, with the Divine, to the heart-interest of every human soul — that really all life about her was luminous to her, as by the revealing of the fine, mysterious gleams of a spiritual light, of which the then undiscovered physical rays are emblem and suggestion. And this is the blessedness God's children were made to give and take in mutual enrichment. Heaven does not forget the great, sweet selves who know not how to be selfish. The Lord himself is selfish for them. That which they pour out upon others returns to them as they look not for it, and centres in their own being. A full tide of the universal joy that is divided to go

round, flows, soon or late, into the hearts that can so widen to receive the promised measure.

This new, beautiful summer was full of a certain strange delight to Lilian, — the keen delight that often touches pain, but of which the pain is all ignored. She saw the story growing; she knew what was hoped for, — what seemed certainly coming to pass, — and she was glad with a gladness that moved unsounded depths in her own nature. She was loving and beloved by representation; all the rich and happy future that lay before these two made intensest hope and wishful solicitude for her. It would be so sad if it should miss. But it could not miss. It was certainly going to be. There would be this much more happiness in the dear, happy world.

No one, not capable of the same self-transfer, or something like it, can comprehend why the keen perception did not reflect and betray to consciousness what in a different spirit might have turned to a sharp or bitter coveting. It is so hard, until we are full-born into the light, to see a good without the small, appropriative instinct to grasp and to possess it. In the spiritual babyhood we snatch and cry.

Harry Henslee said to himself in these days, not, "It would disappoint my father so," but, "It would please my father so."

He even asked himself why he should not be happy. He had known Estabel all his life. She was thoroughly companionable to him. He liked her strength, when it did not presuppose and set itself against his weakness. And it was only in the judgment of an unsparing strength like hers that he was weak. He had the quiet, every-day wisdom that took things as they were, and believed that they could be made better, when it needed, without any rude overturning. He liked his fellow mortals, and did not hypercriticise them. Between him and Estabel, all these matters would settle

themselves, he thought. "All that will pass over," his father had said.

At any rate, it seemed to him that after all that the years had been leading up to and making evident, the right of choice lay with Estabel. If she cared — and if his father intensely desired — then so let it be. It came to this point in his mind, and I think that rather than of weakness it was of strength. He would do all that his father asked; there would be no absolute satisfaction to himself in leaving it undone. He took no note of the suggestion that if he failed, it would be to become free. He honestly decided that he would give the thing its chance. Even in his own nearest interests, he was of the temperament to take his world as it was, rather than turn it violently upside down.

There was immediate planning about the Golden-rod. She was almost ready for her launching. There was soon to be a little party of house visitors who should be asked to stay for the ceremony, — several from Peaceport, a few from Tophthorpe. Others would be there for the day, merely. It was likely to be a gay, notable company. A good deal was to be done, and many little matters of detail to be decided.

"They want me at the Place to-day," said Estabel, coming into the shop parlor. "Harry has walked over for me."

Harry had not followed her in. For some reason he had stopped out in the shady back porch, where he drank a cool dipperful of water from the well, and then picked up the blue kitten, as he called Estabel's little Maltese cat, and sat down to play with it on the doorstep. He had met Estabel there, feeding it, as he came up through the garden.

Aunt Esther had a message to send to Cousin Lucy, and an inquiry to make, upon which errand she went out, found the young man teaching the kitten to jump over his hands, and further detained him, instead of asking him in.

The two girls were left alone for a moment.

"I don't see why you should n't come too," said Estabel.

"But I do," Lilian answered, smiling. "Not asked there; and wanted here. I'm not exactly a piece of you, you know, however attached we are."

"Separation is a hard thing, sometimes. I wonder if we shall ever have to go different ways." Estabel spoke with a gravity hardly accounted for by the situation.

"I don't think there are any different ways." And then Lilian grew grave also. "I think — sometimes — may I say so, Estabel? — that in some things you don't exactly know your own mind. I think you are meant to be a very happy woman."

Estabel looked for a second intently into the sweet, warm face and the depth of the searchlight eyes. Then she changed her gravity to an odd sort of fun.

"You think — and you think — and you think! I think *you* are in a terrible hurry to be a very happy angel!"

She took the uplifted face between her hands, kissed Lilian, and left her.

They stopped halfway through the wood, where the pine fragrance was richest, under a tenting of boughs over a soft, needle-filled hollow, and sat down in their old fashion, in one of their wonted places, upon a lichened log.

Harry had something to say, and he took for granted the pause in which to say it.

Words hardly ever impend that do not give the premonition of their coming. Estabel knew that a moment had arrived that there was no use in evading, that she had no least wish to evade. Whether she might perhaps control or modify its announcement, might effect decision without categorical explanation, was another matter. All her feminine diplomacy sprang up, alert,

to do this. She did not want to refuse Harry Henslee. She did not wish him to have to remember, by and by, that he had put himself in a false position.

"In two weeks the Goldenrod is to be launched," he said.

"I know," responded Estabel.

"And I suppose you know what they expect of us?"

"To be on board; to christen her; and to be launched in her."

"Exactly. Don't you know that they would be glad that it should be our launching?"

Estabel was delighted that he had put it so, — what "they expected;" what "they would be glad of." If she could only keep it all in that third-person form of statement!

"I think they thought of it long ago; before the Goldenrod was thought of. And now they have set their hearts upon it," he continued.

"Is n't that a pity? Because, of course, that could never be enough."

Estabel broke a leaf of wintergreen from a stem she held in her hand, and put its tip daintily between her teeth. "How shall we get their hearts off from it?"

She looked sidewise, mischievously, at him. Sentiment, if he had begun with it, could hardly have persisted against that look. And yet there was something provocative of all the sentiment that was really in him toward her, in that little mockery of hers.

"Must we do that?" he asked her.

It was time now. Another word might change the whole third-personal into first, discussion into appeal, that would seem to be incumbent.

"Harry," — and she threw the leaf and stem away from her, and turned and faced him without disguise or hesitation, — "you know that we do not care for each other in that way. And we are really too fond of each other to make such a mistake."

Well, this was bluntness. This was going to the root of the matter, without any doubt. He looked at her, not thinking at the instant what to say. Then the absurdity struck them both, and they both laughed.

"If that is your ultimatum," Harry began.

"But it is n't. There's something else. Look way into your heart, Harry, and see if it is n't there. I think you have been afraid of it, and that is why you have made up your mind to come to me."

She stood up now. There was something just a wee bit scornful, or ready to become so, in her tone.

"No!" cried Harry, springing also to his feet.

"I'll make you understand me now, if you never have before. It was n't that. It never has been that, that made me thin-skinned and cantankerous about things. I just can't bear to have anybody I think much of looked down upon by other sorts of folks. And as to speaking to you — and making up my mind about you — I'd do a good deal harder thing than that to please my father."

Estabel held out her hand. "I'm on your side, now, Harry. And it's all right. You have n't made a word of love to me, and I did n't mean you should. We've just talked matters over and we understand. And I advise you to tell your father about that something else. You don't know how good he can be until you try."

They walked along the wood path together a little way, hand in hand. When they came to the old brook-crossing at the stepping-stones, Harry went first, and gave his hand again to Estabel, and helped her over. And so, without thinking, except that they were charmingly of one accord, they walked on up the slope together, and near the garden corner met Mr. Henslee suddenly.

He glanced from one to the other with a kindly smile. They dropped their hands apart and came up to him.

"Is it all right between you, children?" was his greeting.

"It's just as right as it can be, dear Mr. Henslee. A great deal righter than it might have been."

And with that she sped past him into the house, to Aunt Lucy.

"What does she mean, Harry?"

"It means — that she knows better. And she is apt to be radically right, you know."

Mr. Henslee did not relish his own words given back to him so.

"Has she refused you, boy?"

"She would n't let there be anything to refuse, father. But we like each other, and understand each other, more completely than we ever did. And I'm sure that what you really want is to see everybody happy."

It was so true that Mr. Henslee took his disappointment to himself, and for the time, at least, put it quietly by. He asked nothing more, though he wondered how the strange "understanding" had come about.

The "something else" waited. They went into the house together, and talked with Estabel and Aunt Lucy about the decorating of the Goldenrod, and the preliminary entertainment of the young house party.

In the end, after all, Mr. Henslee thought everything might come right, even in his way. For there had been no refusal.

Either there was still hope, or Harry was particularly comfortable without hope. Whichever might be the case, Mr. Henslee had the sense to see that there was nothing to meddle with, or reasonably to deplore.

Aunt Esther was sharper at discovery, and more positive in her conclusion. That was partly because she was a woman, and partly because she had had more continual opportunity for weighing and balancing probabilities. She had been for some time uncertain about

issues; perhaps gradually growing to be a little divided in her own wishes. She had become very fond of Lilian. It had been quite as much for the girl's sake, as for any anxiety concerning tacit family plans, that she had spoken that little word in season to the Glad-mother. Not for all the family plans in the world, nor for her own most essential interests, would Esther Charlock have schemed or moved a finger in underhanded interference.

When Estabel came back, and Harry Henslee left her with a friendly good-night at the door, she was a little puzzled. Nothing seemed to have occurred, after all. But there was a kind of relieved cheerfulness in Estabel's face and manner all the evening, and in her way with Lilian a certain loving wistfulness that showed in a soft tone and a look that dwelt upon her as with some secret, happy thought that yet had doubt in it.

Would the angel take the gift that might be coming to the woman? Would she, at the right time, understand herself, having so little self? That was the question in her thought, as she watched the sweet, unconscious composure of Lilian's face; and although Aunt Esther did not translate it into words, she read the feeling, and set it alongside the other, equally evident one.

"She looks as I feel when I've got through a job of housecleaning. She's got something off her mind. But she's turning round now, and taking up something else just as responsible."

That was what Aunt Esther divined at once, and it did not take her long to "ravel it all out" for herself in a pretty close approximation to the fact.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SAUNSEE MILLS.

THE approaching launch and its accompanying festivities at Henslee Place were stirring the whole countryside to gayety. It was a great thing to be included in the house party. It was the next great thing to be staying in the neighborhood, even as far as Peaceport and Pequant. Invitations were scattered liberally for the launch itself, and with only unavoidable restriction to house and grounds, and to the various excursion parties which were arranged to pass the time pleasantly during the week preceding the great event, which was fitly to conclude the generously extended entertainment.

It was a long time since the Stillwick shipyards had been in use for their old, fine purpose which had made wide reputation and been the pride of the coast section of the county. Mr. Henslee was a deeply respected, highly popular man. Memories of stately hospitalities and old family importance gave grace and distinction to whatever, in later and busier days, revived them. And with all the rest, there was young Harrison Henslee coming up to share and finally possess and represent the whole, — place, wealth, tradition. No small interest and speculation gathered around him, watching his course and choice in life. Rumor had circulated that these were preordained. Rumor was being verified as to the proposition of the first part; a good deal might depend upon whether the verification was to be extended to that of the second. This launching festival might

make some definite disclosure; it could hardly help giving clue and color to probabilities.

Every Tophthorpe girl who had a school or society friend in Peaceport made interest for some timely asking to a few days' stay. Peaceport people were hospitable; there was scarcely a family, of a certain set, that had not in this August holiday some young visitor. And there was great driving to and fro, and trying of the new railroad, between Peaceport and Stillwick.

There was a sketching picnic to the Saunsee Mills. These were spinning factories, picturesquely placed where the little Saunsee comes into Stillwick River between Moonic Ledges, cutting its way with a natural rush and incline of some thirty feet in half a mile, and utilized for power by a fine dam across the ravine, a furlong or so above the junction of the streams.

Lovely woods and bits of view abound; there are grand climbs up the fir-grown heights; a little way beyond the mills there is a charming hollow glade for lunching convenience; and the mills themselves, with their complete and delicate machinery and their pretty product, afford a rationally sufficient object for the jaunt. It is always well to have a rational object; a few people will always care for that; and it chaperones, as it were, all incidental and general amusement.

The morning was bright, and the party was gay; large enough to divide into groups, and choose differently among the attractions of the place. To a good many it was sufficient that there were people; it hardly mattered where the people went, or what for, so that they were of the right sort, and one was among them. That is one great secret of associations, clubs, improvement societies, benevolent unions; it often does not seem to signify what the swarm holds on to, if only there can be a swarm. Doubtless the social instinct was given for good and happy ends, and such are sometimes subserved by it.

Estabel and Lilian really wanted to see the mills, which spun such famous woolen yarns, from heavy carpet fibres to fine, soft, delicate threads such as the Gladmother knitted up into lovely little shoulder shawls and baby blankets to give away.

There were separate ranges of buildings for the different kinds of manufacture. One ran along the river bank, and the other extended back, at right angles to it. Under the waterside block, at its lower end, across which the other wing stood contiguous, an archway in the brickwork of the ground story gave entrance through to the inclosed mill yard. This brick-walled basement was used for storage; the upper chambers held the running works.

"I want to begin at the beginning," Estabel said.

"And at the foundation? You always do," Harry answered laughing. "Come down here, then." And he led them along the path by the river edge behind the mill, to the outer angle of the main structures, where two or three rough steps descended to the power-house, projected upon strong piers above the water. Here, underneath the plank flooring, that palpitated and jarred with the incessant regular beat, whirled and churned the huge turbine wheel in the mighty urging of the current sweeping down between the narrow limits of the flume.

Two or three other girls had come with them, but most people wanted only to see the thing in full blast of accomplishment, and had already gone in above, to make more or less rapidly the usual course from the "opening" and "blowing" chambers, and the carding and lapping rooms, whence the fluff soon drove them forward, to the clearer precincts, where they could watch the pretty slivering and roving and reeling, and the spinning out upon broad traveling frames of the innumerable finished threads, that wound themselves at last upon long ranks of whirling bobbins.

"What a dim, dank, doleful hole!" said one girl, just glancing in at the low doorway of the eerie-looking place where Harry told them "the party began."

"I don't think I care about foundations," she decided. "Take 'em for granted. I've no doubt they're all right. When *you* are satisfied, come back to common daylight. Good-by."

And she sprang lightly up the steps again, followed by one of her companions.

"That archway takes you through to the mill yard," Harry Henslee called out after them. "Go in at the middle door on the left, where the staircase runs up, and you'll overtake the others."

"It's just as well to have only a few here at a time," he remarked, as he rejoined the remaining three, and they entered.

The third girl who persisted was Corinna Chilstone.

Times were changed since the days at Mr. Satterwood's, and the "impregnable castle," and the "not knowing a girl because you happened to go to the same school with her." There are schools and schools; they were in another one now, where Estabel was taking a degree higher than Corinna had quite come to, with all her precaution. Estabel Charlock was in the heart of the Henslee home and intimacy; Harry Henslee was the finest young fellow, with the most brilliant prospects, of any they knew in all Tophthorpe; so Mr. Chilstone said to his wife, more than once, in Corinna's hearing.

Mrs. Chilstone could not do much in Estabel's direction just now; she had refused her opportunity. The Clymers were no longer their neighbors; they were in Europe—in the East—heaven knew where, or when they would come back. But Mrs. Chilstone raised the personal interdict, and took occasion to observe that it was fortunate for the girl that circumstances had changed her Tophthorpe connection, and to admit that under suitable conditions she individually did well enough.

Condescension or patronage would be supererogatory — they were impossible — in Casino Crescent; the only link — and that had been weakened, as far as small frictions could weaken indissoluble relationships — was with Aunt Brithwaite and Mary; both Corinna and her mother sought diligently to undo unfavorable impression there.

Corinna spoke with unblushing compliment of Estabel Charlock, "come out so very well after all her school-girl *bêtises*;" and laughed at herself for having, perhaps, misjudged her in a hurry. "You can't tell about looks or style, or even conduct, by the way a girl appears at fifteen," she said, with tardy magnanimity and fresh world-wisdom. "She may change altogether, just as the color of her hair changes. And then, of course, other people change their minds."

"Estabel has not changed," said Mrs. Brithwaite quietly. "There is more of her, but she is just the same. She has only deepened and ripened."

"So I said, like the color of her hair; but it makes all the difference," said the unabashed Corinna.

Even the milliner's shop — even the chosen friend, the carpenter's daughter and milliner's assistant — these facts were smoothed over now with a tolerant acceptance, "under present conditions," in which so much else, of highest countenance and of things best worth while, were involved. The self-called "best society" has its own special knack and privilege of smoothing over, or ignoring, "under conditions," far worse impeachmentments. "The king — the royal circle — can do no wrong," is its tacitly adopted motto.

"People can always do as they like in the country; what is quite inadmissible here is extremely respectable there," Mrs. Chilstone pronounced, with majestic condonement. "And it's very kind, I'm sure, the way they've all taken up that little Hawtree girl, who is really a genius in a certain sort."

Estabel was actually in a position to "take up;" it was evident that she was past the point for being put down.

All this is very small beer to chronicle; but there is a vast amount of small beer brewed in the world, and there are persons of whom there is nothing else to chronicle.

So the Chilstones had come blandly over from Pequannuck, and renewed their summer acquaintance, and been invited, with the Brithwaites and other mutual social foregatherers, to the pleasant doings at Stillwick; and so to-day, where Harry Henslee led, and Estabel and Lilian followed, Miss Chilstone found it instructive and interesting to go also; even into the dim, dank, noisy, shuddering "foundation" of things at the mill.

They did not stop here long; Harry simply showed them how the shaft from the horizontal water-wheel came up through a slot in the flooring, and turned the bevel-gear wheel that was also horizontal upon the same axis at its top, but whose slanting ridges and grooves played into those of a similar one set perpendicularly to it, whose shaft, supported in a heavy block, ran on into the next compartment with its converted motion. Toward this adjoining room, the entrance to which opened from inside the arched passage between the mill buildings, they turned their steps by a short ascending footway.

Here the long, low shaft from the power-house crossed, forming the axle of two great, upright, partly sunken motor pulleys that ran parallel, at a distance from each other of some two or three yards, their strong beltings passing up through the floor above, and severally connecting with the machinery of the upper chambers of the two wings of the works, conveying into their multiplied complications the life energy of the whole.

They had to stand close together, and speak loudly to each other, for the space was small and filled with

the sound of rush and rumble, swash and clank. It was a little more possible to hear and be heard than it had been in the power-house, and there was also more light; and Harry proceeded to give a partly detailed explanation of transmuted motions, making some slight, hasty illustrations with pencil and tablet, of gear-wheels, cross-bands, and shaftings, that showed the principle at a glance.

"You'll see a good deal more of it upstairs," he said. "But there" — pointing upward where the belt-ings disappeared into the room above — "goes the force that starts and keeps alive the whole concern."

"Very curious, I'm sure," remarked Corinna Chilstone, pressing round in front of the group to look more closely at Harry's diagram. "It's so nice to know all about it." She spoke in the necessary raised tone, which, as in talking with a deaf person, absurdly emphasizes an insignificant utterance.

Harry laughed. "Yes," he returned, with the same exaggerated effort, and a *souppçon* of conscious fun. "Nothing like exhaustive research. But — hullo! Look out!"

The last exclamation was in forceful earnest, and he grasped her by the arm.

At the same moment Lilian sprang to Miss Chilstone's side, almost between her and the ponderous revolving shaft. "Take care!" she cried. "Your dress!"

She snatched and gathered in her hands the long, voluminous folds of summer silk, and held them back, as Harry drew the girl away in safety.

"My!" ejaculated the young woman, bewildered by the suddenness, and hardly realizing the specific danger. Something terrible, it seemed, was threatening here, and might yet happen. She had much better be out. With that flash of conviction, and perhaps a little pique, just before provoked, mingling with her fright,

she released herself abruptly from Harry's hold, and sped swiftly through the open doorway.

It had been only a breathing space of time, but in it something more had really happened.

Lilian wore a delicate muslin gown, full and floating in the fashion of the time. As she had seized upon Corinna's garments, forgetful of her own, these swept treacherously near the steady driving axle of the wheels.

A waft of wind blew through from the outside.

Estabel and Harry turned to see the hem of the pretty skirt, all unknown to Lilian, picked up by the projection of the shafting-pin, and lifted into the first round of a horrible revolution.

In another breath, Harry had her in his arms.

CHAPTER L.

"I WOULD *NEVER* HAVE LET YOU GO!"

IF it had only been the catching by a pin of the light material! But the giant had a terrible maw; a big, strong jaw, and it laid ready hold. It was as if the lapping of a tongue had drawn into the monster's mouth the first bit within its cruel reach of the thing it lay in wait for, and would feed on.

It began to chew ; to wind horribly into its devouring grind a larger clutch ; to hold fast; to drag, slowly, pitilessly.

There was other clothing. There were stronger hems. Oh, was there, Harry wondered in a torturing flash, *a hoop!*

He fought with his strength against the strength of the machine. He wound his arms about the girl's waist, and pulled, with all his weight and hers, away.

The fabric tore. It *should* tear, and go! It must yield itself; but Lilian should not be touched; she never should be forced nearer!

He did not lose his head. His own charge was the charge of this instant—here; but he did not forget what should be done.

"Call to some one," he bade Estabel hoarsely. "Stop the works!"

And Estabel flew to the doorway. A man crossed the mill yard. She repeated the command to him.

"Stop the works! An accident!" she shouted clear and strong.

The man turned, ran toward her, passed her. A

glance within, as he shot by the door, showed him the full warrant of occasion.

Estabel was back, upon her knees, by Lilian's side. She seized the rending edges of the torn garments; she wrenched them farther and farther away; she threw apart, in great stretches, the slitting lengths, outstripping the destruction; she flung the fragments off, as she would fling pacifying morsels to a wild beast.

And then — it was not a moment — the whole had hardly been a thing of minutes — the creature had been holden by the throat; its breath and pulse were gone; its great power fell limp; it gave up the ghost.

A slow hush ran over the mill. Upstairs, the wheels slackened, the belts flapped, the spindles and bobbins whirled weakly, with a faint singing sound in their expiring hum. It was truly thrilling; it was like a death.

The gay visitors were surprised into a silence. What did it mean?

"Some hitch below," an overlooker said, and went down to see.

Harry had hurried Lilian out into the air. The overseer's house was near at hand, just outside the mill yard, beyond the river wing. He and Estabel hastened her along the quiet path at the back, where they had come down.

"Can you walk?" Harry had asked.

"Oh, yes — please — somewhere out of the way," she answered.

So, pale and sweet, though torn and trembling, she went on with them, and Harry still kept his supporting arm about her waist, while Estabel, upon her other side, held her hand tenderly, and let the kindly breeze from the river sweep her own soft skirts across to shelter Lilian's disarray.

Harry Henslee himself was pale enough, and felt a tremulousness he would not show. It was in his voice,

though, when he said anxiously, "You are sure you are not hurt? I had to drag you so."

"I am quite safe." Then with a little shudder, — "If you had had to let me go!"

"I would *never* have let you go!"

Past, present, and future tenses were all in the intonation of the words, and an involuntary underscoring in the tightened pressure of his arm about her. He could not have helped it if he had tried; and he did not try. But as soon as the words were spoken he realized, with a conscious exultation, that he had virtually said it all.

Mrs. Pritchett, the overseer's wife, received them with effusive kindness. The young lady must go right up to her room, and "lay down." She would make her a cup of tea. She'd had a strain, of course; she must be braced up and quieted down. A person needed both, after such a "fluctuation."

"A cup of tea — take it layin' down — 'll do you all the good in the world. 'Tain't so much the tea itself, perhaps — if tea was n't handy, but it most always is — it's just the coming back to something common and comfortable, when you've been shook half out of your senses. You want to be broke, if it's only for a minute, of that feeling that you're in the middle of the wheels, and be set on your own every-day track again. It's about the only way you can help folks under bereavement. Most anything will give a start, sometimes: a drop of camphire, or a snuff of salts; my aunt Dianthejane come to on a clam-stew, and an apple-dowdy, dished up, unexpected. Even lookin' in the glass, and seein' you're right there, after all, same as you were before, will settle a person a good deal. Though I would n't advise that right away, in your case, till you're a little bit samer. Take this now, dear, and then we'll see to your gown. It's real lucky you don't wear much of a hoop. If it had been one of

them long floating bells, now, and a strong silk over it!"

"That was what Miss Chilstone had on! Oh, Estabel!" Lilian turned very pale again.

"There, don't talk; and don't remember anything," said Mrs. Pritchett, disappearing into a big closet, whence she emerged presently with a rustling pile of her best summer equipments.

A white skirt was easily furnished; and then she would have had Lilian put on a blue *barège*, flounced and ribboned, quite fine and fashionable; but Lilian said, "no; not anything that could possibly hurt, or be defaced, or have the freshness taken off." She would have that nice white dimity, and thanked Mrs. Pritchett so much.

"You need n't mind a grain about takin' the new off; and you ain't goin' back into the machinery. But you shall take your choice. I guess you'll do well enough in most anything."

Harry thought so, half an hour later, when he came to inquire, and found her ready to go back among her friends.

"Only take me into some quiet place, and don't let people talk to me," she said.

The company was in the shady hollow, established at their lunch. Harry found a little nook against a sheltering rock, with whispering birches growing round it, and a great strong oak branching over from above, behind it. Here he placed her and Estabel comfortably, and brought Mrs. Brithwaite and Mary to sit by, within the narrow opening through the fringe of shrubbery, and went away himself, to answer questions and fend off curious approach.

Miss Chilstone had a mind to share the renown and the romance.

"The same thing came very near happening to me only a few minutes before," she remarked to right and

left, as the excited comment went around. "My dress was catching, but Mr. Henslee pulled me away just in time. She ought to have come away then, as I did."

Mrs. Chilstone sought out Harry.

"I hear you have saved two lives to-day, Mr. Harrison Henslee," she said, with a graceful air of emotion. "Let me thank you for your rescue of Corinna."

"Miss Hawtree saved Miss Chilstone's life, at the very great risk of her own. That is, she prevented the danger, which consequently fell upon herself," Mr. Harrison Henslee replied, with cool disclaimer.

But Mrs. Chilstone did not seek out Miss Hawtree with her thanks.

When they all got home, Estabel and Lilian accounted for the white dimity to Miss Charlock, whom they first met, by the simple statement that Lilian had torn her lilac muslin, and been obliged to borrow this of Mrs. Pritchett at the mill. They thought it better to put off the full explanation, especially with the Gladmother, till a night's rest and a just-as-usual morning had, according to Mrs. Pritchett's theory, set all things on a stable, common track again. Estabel knew that this was far more advisable for Lilian herself than to live over again by exciting repetition the occurrence of those terrible few minutes.

Miss Charlock looked from one to the other with keen eyes and a firm set of the lips. Lilian slipped out of the room.

"Where's the pieces?" demanded Miss Charlock of Estabel.

"Oh, it was pretty badly used up. It would n't be any good, and so we left it."

Miss Charlock continued her gaze, first through her spectacles, with uplifted chin, and then with head depressed and the line of vision preternaturally raised above them.

"H'm! Some folks think they're keeping dark

when a thing's as plain as daylight; and when it's plain as daylight they think they're keeping dark!"

"Well, Aunt Esther, *you* can keep dark with your eyes wide open, you know," said Estabel.

"Chooty-choo!" And Aunt Esther added to herself as Estabel also passed on upstairs, "That girl's been within an inch of her life. Or the other thing. I suppose she and the Gladmother would say it was all one."

Miss Charlock was perspicacious. When Mrs. Trubin and Lilian talked it all over the next day, the Gladmother asked tenderly, "How did you bear that one terrible minute, dearie?"

Lilian's head was resting on the Gladmother's shoulder. Her face nestled down closer to the loving heart.

"I knew — help would come — quickly — from one side or the other, and either way it would be life," she said softly.

"I thank the dear Lord he sent the help on this side, and brought you back to me!" was the fervent return.

Brought back. Was she altogether brought back? Or, if so, was it with a larger altogether — a new experience of this life, instead of that swift change into the life beyond? Was this side to open into wider beauty for her, be richer, be nearer without violence to that other, to lead more gently toward it, be more identical with it?

Lilian felt her heart mysteriously full of something it had not held in a clear consciousness before. But there was nothing at this moment to tell the Gladmother, except what she had told.

CHAPTER LI.

"CAN YOU PUT UP WITH IT?"

THERE was something, however, for Harry Henslee to tell his father.

Escaping the gay company on piazza and lawn and in the open parlors, he made his way after tea to the quiet upper balcony reached only from Mr. Henslee's own room in the long wing, where that gentleman was enjoying his comfortable evening cigar.

The younger man did not smoke. That virile accomplishment had as yet no enticement for him. There are elective studies in life, as well as in the universities. Harry Henslee had not included this in his curriculum. But he loved dearly to sit by his father in this evening peace, and talk with him sometimes as they were hardly apt to talk together in the broad and busy daylight. The evening smoke, like the after-business drive, was a time for confidence.

If I have succeeded in presenting young Harrison Henslee as he presents himself to me, you have understood him to be the sweet, fresh young fellow, with as few faults of his environment as might accrue, that he certainly was. Life was really all before him, in the best sense. His father exulted in him for this reason. Lilian Hawtree, with her intuitive insight, going to the heart of things and persons, had divined it. Any woman, also fresh and young, might hold herself privileged to begin to live, and to grow on to higher and higher living, with such a one, who had nothing to over-live or to live down, but every best possibility of nature to unfold and satisfy.

Absolutely free from all bitter warp and prejudice, even in his little superficial conventionalities, frank and generous, full of the early home affection that makes a natural wider love, — a love that perpetuates home from home through happy generations, — sure in warmth and loyalty, he was a good deal more than Estabel had been able to give him just and entire credit for. She had thought she knew him, when she only knew his boyish ways. She had settled his place in her scale of judgment before she had learned that secret of looking beneath the surface to the inner side, for the realities of character and relation, and for the meanings of all things and circumstances. The difference between her and Lilian was that she was still learning this, and applying it as theory to proof, while with Lilian it was something instant and identical. It was as science to inspiration. Lilian had had the blessed talisman of the direct perception from the first. This made her patient with hardness, because of the tenderness she was sure might be underneath; but it drew her with a yet sweeter impulse to the simple kindliness that flowed, like sunshine, from some central power of being and of giving. There may be hardness without tenderness; at least, a hardness that tends to permanently crush back and seal up tenderness; but the strength of the good heart must be behind the continual act of a warm humaneness. The "way of the heaven," as she had said, is after all the final, prevailing way of "setting the world to rights."

And Harry recognized in her this very help and echo to his own worthiest. "She does n't pick the world to pieces, nor set a fellow to dissecting himself into bits," he phrased it in his thought. "But she's there, with the gist and marrow of it, all the same. She's just made 'of every creature's best,' on purpose for every creature to know his own best when he sees 'it, and so be made the best of."

And with this in his heart, he came out to-night to talk to his father.

"Father," he began, as he pulled up a piazza and seated himself close beside the elder man, leaning a little forward with his arms along his knees, twisting a bit of honeysuckle in his fingers, while his head bent very near Mr. Henslee's ear, "I am afraid I am going to disappoint you."

Mr. Henslee took the cigar from his mouth and looked round upon his boy.

"If you are, Harry, it will be for the first time in all your life."

"Thank you, pater," was the reply, in a mannerly tone. "That makes it all the harder."

"What if I won't be disappointed? I know it can be nothing wrong. What has happened?"

"It has happened that I have found myself out of the last, and given myself away."

Mr. Henslee repeated the words with an intention. The phrase had not then become a colloquialism.

"Committed myself, I mean. Quite involuntarily. It comes to the same thing. Father, I want I have asked for my wife, and I have so nearly asked that I must say the rest at once. But I had to say it first."

Mr. Henslee was silent. It needed a little time to take this in, even so far as to reply. It would be longer to fully adjust himself to such a change in his plans and feeling. But he was first of all a father. His child had found out, truly, what was bread to him; he would not insist upon a stone. If he had tried to manage his son's life, to forecast it a little, and to direct his steps, if they would be turned, toward the path that looked to him most desirable and safe, it was only the impulse of pure fatherhood; worldly scheming, nothing whatever to do with it. It was none the less a little startling to discover that the boy he had long in his hand, and upheld, had found his own feet, and was suddenly, as it were, going alone, choosing his own way.

Harry took advantage of the silence, and put aside its awkwardness, by telling at once the story — within the story — of the day.

"You see — maybe you remember, father," he said cunningly, with a smile, "there are times when a man does n't know exactly what he is likely to say next. I told her I would never let her go. That was because she thought I might have had to let that brutal machine get her away from me. But it meant that *nothing* should; no hard or cruel machinery of any sort; that I would never give her up."

Then Mr. Henslee spoke.

"Yes; you will have to tell her the rest, Harry," he said.

"Can you put up with it?"

Mr. Henslee's cigar had gone out. He tossed what remained of it away over the railing, and turned quite round in his chair toward his son.

"Can I put up with *you*, Harry? I've had a hand in the making of you what you are; and it is what you are you choose from. It would be hard if after all I could n't trust your choice. Come and tell me to-morrow what she says to you."

It was so, without demur or qualification that should mar, or be hereafter remembered, that this high-minded gentleman gave his consent.

"Estabel told me that I did n't know how good you could be till I tried," said Harry, with a stir of strong feeling in his voice.

"She knew of this?"

"I told you she knew better than even I did, then."

"Estabel is a fine creature." And a breath that might have been the sigh of a regret, or the last gentle release of a useless wish, escaped him as he spoke.

"We must go down now, Harry. And — however it turns out — we won't let anything be talked of before the present affair comes off."

CHAPTER LII.

"HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF."

THE two sat together upon the sloping mossy rock under the thick, spicy pines, where Harry had found Estabel and Lilian that first morning that seemed so long ago.

He had come over to-day at as early an hour as might be ventured, with his open inquiry and his reserved asking. He had met Miss Charlock in the garden, and put the first to her. Then he had said, quite as openly and frankly, "Now, Miss Esther, if you please, I want Lilian."

"Oh! If I please, you want Lilian?" Aunt Esther repeated. "And what if *I* want Lilian, if *you* please?"

"But I don't. And you will spare her to me? A walk in the woods will rest her. I came on purpose."

"I have n't the least doubt you did. You've come on purpose pretty often lately, have n't you? And I've been pretty good, I think. Well — *I* don't mean to ask much of her to-day. I'll see what she says to you."

"Not exactly, Aunt Esther," the young man murmured as she went off. "*De post facto* will be time enough."

"Are n't you coming, Estabel?" Lilian had asked, as she put on her hat.

"No. I'm busy. It's your turn to-day. History repeats itself. Mind you're real good to Harry, Lil," she added, as she kissed her.

"Why? Were n't you real good to him?"

"History repeats itself, I said. Yes; I was just the goodest I knew how to be."

"How long am I to keep dark with my eyes wide open?" inquired Miss Charlock, after Lilian had gone.

"Oh, a time, and times, and half a time. Not more than half a time, now, I guess, Aunt Esther."

"When you're saucy you think you're smart; and you think you're smart when you're saucy," returned Miss Charlock.

"Chooty-choo!" said Estabel.

Lilian was very happy to-day. Life was sweet to her. She did not stop to ask the reason why. She took her day as it came, not dreaming definitely, even yet, what it was to bring forth. She was in that half-wakened state when dreams are vague, delicious.

So they walked away into the fragrant, gentle mystery of the pines together, and came to the old lichened boulder by the brookside.

Harry asked her if she remembered.

"One does n't forget such days," she said. "I think it was almost the happiest I had had then, in my whole life."

"No, one does n't forget — when happiness begins. But I am glad you say 'almost,' and 'then.'"

"Why?" she asked him innocently.

"Because I should like to try to make some still happier for you, now, and always. That very day I began to love you, Lilian. I want you for my wife."

He had turned to her and taken both her hands in his. She left them there. She was hardly conscious of her hands.

He waited. Perhaps a minute. It seemed long to him. "Have n't you an answer for me, dear?"

Then a little thrill ran through her, and trembled into broken words.

"I thought — I did n't know — until " — and with these fragments the difficult answer ended.

Harry still held fast her hands. He was looking straight into her eyes — as straight as she would let him look, with the flickering glances that met and fled from his. The light in his face almost made her afraid. She did not dare to let it kindle hers with its magnetic shaft.

"I will ask you one of those things at a time," he said. "You 'thought'?"

"I thought — it was to be something different."

"Nobody else thought so — who was immediately concerned to think. Estabel and I have discussed and settled that. And you 'did not know'?"

"I did not know — how much it might mean for me."

Now he caught her with one arm round her waist.

"'Until'?" he demanded eagerly.

"Until — yesterday — and now," she answered him.

"And forever!" said the heartsome, realistic young fellow, with a glad solemnity.

They hardly knew how long that morning was, among the pines.

As they walked back at last through the orchard, a bluebird over their heads in the branches broke forth with its rare, late warble.

"Forever — forever — forever," it repeated.

A trail of the heaven-color followed it, as it flashed away in the sunshine.

CHAPTER LIII.

QUEEN ESTHER.

"MR. HENSLEE wants you in the parlor, Lilian," said Miss Charlock.

"*Mr. Henslee?*"

"Yes; my cousin. Not your boy. There's at least two of them in the world, after all," Aunt Esther answered, with an odd shortness and an odder twinkle in the corner of her eye.

"Don't be grim-funny with me to-day, dear Miss Charlock!"

"Call me Aunt Esther, and I won't." And she kissed her. "I'm a mixture; most people are. You must take me as I come, as you do chow-chow pickle." And as Aunt Esther left the room there was something in the corner of her eye besides the twinkle, which did not, however, put the twinkle out.

She had made up her mind to it; she loved Lilian, and she was glad. But she would hardly have been human — she certainly would not have been Miss Esther Charlock, with nearly twenty years of a pleasant dream behind her that had melted back into dreamland — if she could quite, at the very first, have kept down the thought, "What shall we do now with Estabel?"

Mr. Henslee came forward to meet Lilian as she entered the door. He took her by both hands and bent down tenderly and kissed her cheek. "My little daughter!" was all he said.

Lilian's face, sweet and flushed with his salute, was lifted to him in a shy, happy surprise.

"Are you going to be so good to me as that?" she asked tremulously.

"I am going to love you dearly, my child. You are going to be very good to me, I think."

"But I thought — I always fancied" — she stopped, as she had just so before, with Harry.

"Well, tell me what you thought," said Mr. Henslee, as he led her to the sofa. "Sit down here, and let us understand each other from the beginning. You fancied?" —

"That you were wishing something else, and that it was sure to happen."

"Nothing is sure to happen but what we do not expect," said Mr. Henslee, smiling. Neither had that saying then become common proverb. "We generally want something else in this world, while the very best is preparing for us. And in this happening — nobody is disappointed."

"How generous you are! I'll try to be a good child, Mr. Henslee."

"I think if there were to be any trying, it would have to be the other way."

After that, there was not much more for words.

"You will go up and see the Gladmother?" Lillian asked presently.

"And while I talk with her, you will put on your things to ride back with me? Aunt Lucy wants to see you."

Lillian shrank a little. "The house is so full of people, Mr. Henslee," she said.

"Aunt Lucy's room is never full. There will be no one there but Harry. And he made me promise not to be very long. The 'people' are all about — on the croquet-ground, out in the bowling-alley, in the peach orchard, and down by the river. The house is almost a solitude. And we *can* drive round to the back door."

While Lillian lingered a little over the simple changes

in her toilet, Mr. Henslee saw first the Gladmother, and then the others with her.

"We are not going to rob you of anything," he told Mrs. Trubin. "If you will only adapt your plans a little to ours, we will try to make it only a happy difference. Harry knows what you and Lilian are to each other."

"And the Lord who sets in families knows how to make the links," the Gladmother answered him. "We won't plan just yet; we shall come across our plans as we go on."

Mr. Henslee began to think that it was not only an unexpected but a very unusual good that was replacing his earlier wishes. The lovely dignity and calm of this beautiful old lady was something learned in higher than what are in ordinary comparison called the highest circles.

"And we won't tell everybody yet," he suggested, as he went downstairs with Aunt Esther and Estabel. Lilian had slipped into the Gladmother's room for a separate good-by. "It would make it harder for Lilian. We'll launch the barque, and then we'll launch" —

"The thunderbolt?" interrupted Miss Charlock, with a ponderous mischief. "You need n't say it; it will say itself. But it might as well be out of our hearing."

"I did n't mean it, Esther. There will be no thunderbolt. I think there is conducting power enough to save that." He spoke with just a touch of not unkindly haughtiness.

"May I say something?" Estabel asked him hurriedly, at the stair foot.

"You always may; anything."

"Then, don't you think there is a very good dissipating atmosphere here just now? Don't you believe Topthorpe would take it more complacently if it were confined in on the spot? Not to-day, of course, but at the right time?"

"I believe you always have inspirations, Estabel. I will tell them after the launch."

"Don't you think Lilian ought to christen the ship?"

Mr. Henslee was not so instantly positive in concurrence to that. He was not quite ready to set Estabel so far aside. But the next day she persuaded him. "It will put her right into her place, with all the honors," she said. "It is only just what ought to be."

And Mr. Henslee saw that the rest would come more naturally.

"You shall be as generous as you please, Queen Esther," he consented. "There can be no dispute with royalty."

Lilian yielded to the wish and argument of all, and to Harry's individual persistence. "You could not please Estabel better," he said.

But her acquiescence was with a certain little private reservation. She, too, had her inspirations.

"We shall all be together?" she asked appealingly.

"Oh, yes; you shall be well supported."

"And perhaps the people won't all notice," she suggested simply.

"Perhaps not, if that consoles you," said Harry, laughing. "There are always a good many who don't catch the point of a thing until it is all over."

"And you won't tell of it beforehand?"

"No, indeed. That would spoil the fun. You shall spring a mine upon them."

Lilian did not half like that way of putting it, but she said no more.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE LAUNCHING OF THE GOLDENROD.

THE day of the launch was a day of glory.

Summer was still tender in the air, but the rich breath of early aromatic autumn met it with a kiss. The hills sent down their messages of ripened odors. "The time is fulfilled; the year is of age, and possesses its inheritance," they said.

The orchards were opulent with fruit; in the gardens there were sweet peas and pansies and summer roses still; the year was not old, but perfect. The asters shone in white and violet constellations; the marigolds were ablaze; in the pastures the tall yellow plumes that claimed the honor of the day were proud and gay. Their representative delegations had gone down in multitudes from the hillsides to figure in pomp for all their tribes.

The Goldenrod was decked from stem to stern.

She lay upon her cradlings, with a graceful lean toward the water, as a swallow leans into the air for flight.

Her lower masts were set; light temporary staffs were run up from them to a stately height, and land-yards stretched in sweeping curves between, and out to prow and taffrail, bearing flags and streamers, and bright wreathings of the chosen flower that transformed their common lines to shining garlands.

At the fore, beneath the union-jack, floated the ship's ensign, a suggestive, if slightly conventionalised, tuft of the emblematic blossoms upon a ground of blue, bordered

with scarlet; at the main, the private signal of the merchant, — a blue diamond in a field of white; above the stern, the stars and stripes.

The company was gathered on the slope of the river bank; some found natural seats of stone or turfy ridge, making them comfortable, if they felt the need, with shawls; there were improvised benches down by the water margin, of boards and blocks from the building yard.

Many walked curiously about, or stood in groups, or came down in little squads close to the ways, to inspect and ask about the details of the vessel, and the methods of its support and letting go.

A special party was upon the deck, moving kaleidoscopically to and fro, certain persons always keeping near the bow to be ready for their sudden duty. The bright attire of ladies and the flutter of gay colors overhead made a picture in the sunlight, and now and then the music of a band struck up, and echoed in sound the brilliance of the visible tones.

The vessel lay slantwise from the spectators; the current which was to take her off swept away into a bend and broadening of the stream, that a little farther widened to its full estuary. The prow, with its queenly, graceful figurehead, seemed to lift itself with a noble courtesy of acknowledgment, like a lady rising to receive and greet her guests, or a great actress before her applauding audience.

The shoring beams had been taken away; the sliding-timbers, upon which the lovely craft was to go down into her waiting element, had been pushed up under her hull upon the ways, that were slippery with plentiful smooth tallow; she rested upon the keel blocks still, but men underneath her with great hammers were alert for the critical moment of striking them away; others were already "wedging up" between the sliding beams to force the vessel's weight upward. Those of the lookers-

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on who understood watched breathless; a crowd of the ignorant were shortly taken by surprise.

Two girls stood together upon the fore deck in the bow; two or three gentlemen just behind them. A shout came up from below; the wedgers and hammerers scrambled with prompt agility back out of possible peril; the keel was eased from its support and the blocking fell aside; the vessel settled gently to its lower place upon the movable timbers, which started — began to slide — along the ways.

She moved. She glided downward. There was the slight crash of glass. In the instant's silence of the expectant throng, a clear voice rang out sweetly, while she who with one hand had broken the bottle of sparkling wine over the rail, held fast with the other that of her companion, drawing her close beside and almost forward, so that for many it was hard to tell which had done the actual christening, as the words were proudly uttered, —

"We name this barque the Goldenrod!"

Before the sound or its impression had fairly died away, down, like a waterfowl, the beautiful form slipped into the embrace of the stream, discarding her supports of block and beam like childish things all done with, buoyed herself gracefully, and curtsied to the gentle swell she made, — her flags and pennants flying gayly backward with her motion and the softly concurring breeze, — and presently lay proudly quiet.

Then a great cheer went up from all, reiterated with specialty, — for the Goldenrod, for the Diamond Line, for the Stars and Stripes; and with the band playing the Star Spangled Banner, and the boats crowding up to the side among the floatage of the disdained chips and lumber, the bright function was over, and the exhilarated company, with animated exchange of comment, compliment, and query, dispersed to their waiting carriages upon the roadside, or along the shady foot-

paths that led back among the skirting copses from the river bank to Henslee Place.

"Which was it?"

"And who was the girl?"

"What did it mean?"

"Well, the Henslees can do anything. And Estabel Charlock can do anything with the Henslees."

"She was astonishingly pretty. Was it just for the effect, or was it for a cover? And when are we to know?"

So the buzz-buzz circulated, as Mr. Henslee foresaw it would, and prepared the way for his adroit little social *coup d'état*.

It was at the happy moment when no break had yet been made in the festive gathering, — when there was yet time, and not too much, for after observance and remark, which were better made here, at once, and the tone taken, — when the viands of the collation were done with, and the plates and forks and cups and spoons collected and removed, — that the great silver punch bowl, on its beautiful antique salver, was brought into the hall and set upon a tripod table under the well of the staircase whose fine sweeping curve ascended with the light yet stately grace that made a chiefly noted point in the admired architecture of the old colonial mansion, and Mr. Henslee came forward beside it with a movement of invitation and a waiting word of something more.

It was claret cup. Miss Henslee did not approve of any more exciting beverage; but it was claret cup such as is only brewed from some old, complex recipe of delicious ingredients, possessed and used most rarely. Its ruby color flashed in the large reflecting curve of the noble basin; thin bits of rich, keen tropical fruits floated in its liquid light; a few fragrant leaves were dropped upon the surface of the generous pool; cunning spices gave out a gently mixed aroma.

There was a little stir toward it among those who saw; the word and the movement were caught through the open rooms, and a soft surge swept the company to its new centre of gratification.

Mr. Henslee took up the ladle.

"Before we drink, friends, I have something to claim your kind congratulation for beside the launching of my vessel. It is a good time to tell it, and it has been a very happy time for it to happen. I have the great pleasure — and honor — to announce to you my son's engagement of marriage to Miss Lilian Hawtree."

The young couple stood close by; Harry, at his father's hint, had managed it so. Lilian had not been told what was coming; "why should she dread it beforehand?" Mr. Henslee had asked. He knew the best thing to trust to would be her delicate, sure instinct, and her lovely simplicity.

He took her by the hand, drew her toward him, bent to her, and kissed her on the forehead. She lifted her sweet, surprise-flushed face and shy-dropped eyes, and met his look upon her with one in which her whole heart shone so that it lighted up her beauty with a glory. Her other little hand laid itself upon his; her soft eyes welled; her lips trembled. She forgot everything but his generous adoption; it was that only which moved her. She was afraid, abashed of nothing, in his strong countenance and protection.

Nobody dared to whisper, "It is the milliner girl." Various enough were the bits of remark that circulated more or less guardedly about the rooms, and wonderful, as usual upon such events, the bits of information that here and there answered eager inquiry.

"Her people are English, they say, and of a very good old name, if you go backward and sideways far enough. No relations, on this side, happily, except, I believe, some sort of a heavenly old grandmother."

The lady listening to this looked across to where

Lilian stood, beside Miss Henslee. "She'll do, I should think," she said between two sips of her claret.

"She'll *have* to do," returned the first speaker. "And we may all make up our minds to it."

A gentleman joined them. "She's as beautiful as the Mrs. Henslee in the hall," he declared. "I congratulate Tophthorpe."

And so Tophthorpe had to submit to be congratulated, until a little later it learned thoroughly to congratulate itself.

"The Henslees always were independent," was heard in another corner. "They have never been very particular about marrying in their own set."

"Their own set!" ejaculated a fine looking old fatherly aristocrat, in almost perilous distinctness. "My dear Mrs. Portreeve, their own set is pretty much all in the Chapel Green burying-ground. You don't find very many of those people about in general society nowadays. But such as are left of them know sufficiently well how to keep up the real character of the stock. Trust them for their marriages."

"Did you name your ship for her, or for the veritable flower of the field?" asked Mrs. Brithwaite of Mr. Henslee, standing with him at the door while her carriage was coming up. "She has the colors of the goldenrod, herself."

Lilian was near the head of the long steps, still with Miss Lucy Henslee, being taken leave of by departing guests with gracious observance.

The low sunlight through the trees touched her whole figure with a delicate, broken illumination. Her hair caught it in brightly gleaming tints. A golden sparkle shone in her happy, olive-shaded eyes. Tall, in her pretty dress of a soft texture, creamy white in color, with narrow lines of satiny maize stripes, and knots of the same-hued ribbons, with her gentle sway of quiet movement and her natural, unsedulous calm and poise,

she was the very impersonation of that life and grace of which—as of every human trait and quality some thing or creature does—the simple pasture blossom stands an unpretending type.

“The very colors—and the very air”—repeated Mrs. Brithwaite, keeping her eyes intently on the unconscious subject of her remark, while Mr. Henslee smiled and said that “things had grouped and illustrated themselves; but that the same one who had chosen the flower of the field had discovered and brought to them the flower of the family.”

Estabel, herself beautiful in her own appropriate attire of a heliotrope-hued gown sprinkled with figures of tiny golden stars, had come with Mrs. Brithwaite and Mary to the door, and Mr. Henslee had claimed her with a reaching out of his hand and a drawing of her close beside himself. He pressed her little fingers affectionately as he spoke.

Hers closed gratefully to his touch, but she only answered to Mrs. Brithwaite’s comment.

“I have always thought that Lilian’s colors were the colors of the mignonette,” she said.

“And so they are; but if you think of it, the goldenrod has broader shades of just the same; and to-day, I think, Miss Hawtree is emphatically the goldenrod.”

“My next ship,” said Mr. Henslee, with a marked inflection of pride and tenderness, “shall be called the Aster.”

CHAPTER LV.

THE GLADMOTHER IS ORACULAR.

MR. HENSLEE had invited Dr. North to the launch and lunch. He had taken the trouble to walk over to Clover Street on purpose, and see the doctor at his office. But Ulick had declined with courteous thanks. "A doctor does n't have time for such things," he said, smiling. "He has to hold himself in readiness for other launchings — into the world or out of it."

"A doctor ought to take time to live." Mr. Henslee looked at the other man with a kindly, tolerating interest. "You may leave out some important bits of your own history, putting yourself aside so inexorably."

Dr. North only answered with another smile, and Mr. Henslee had to say, "Well — good-day," and leave it so.

"He spoke as if he meant something," Ulick said to himself as he closed the door and went back to his arm-chair. "Only he could n't possibly have anything to mean."

The next day a neat, careful little note, in a prim, small hand of a fashion two generations old, sealed with a tiny transparent wafer, came to Dr. North in his mail. It ran thus: —

DEAR DR. ULICK NORTH, — They say it is not likely you will be at the launch to-morrow. That is a pity, for I think it would interest you and do you good. And besides, I want to see you. Please make a holiday if possible, and come out for a pleasant surprise.

Afterward, if you can take the time to call over here,
I shall be very much obliged.

Your attached and grateful old friend,

REBECCA TRUBIN.

Ulick North decided that this was a professional call. If he could not go to launches or lunches, he need not neglect an old patient.

"She does n't say she needs me, but it may mean more than she says."

He read over the innocently ambiguous lines, without discovering all their ambiguity.

"I can skip the shipyard — and the party. I can't spare time for everything. But I'll run down for an hour or so and see the Gladmother. Nobody else — that signifies — will be at home."

So by the forenoon train that took a gay crowd out from Tophthorpe, landing it at the flag station at Stillwick Corners, Dr. North went down, taking a seat early at the extreme forward end of the first car, and, avoiding all chance recognition and encounter, kept on to the Bridge Village terminus, which gave him only a three minutes' walk to the Charlock cottage. There would be a return to Tophthorpe an hour later, in time for him to keep his afternoon office hours.

Mrs. Trubin was alone, except for the presence in the house and shop, respectively, of the chorewoman and Eliza Gillespy, who — the latter — had promised to "see after Mis' Trubin, an' set with her all she could." Eliza Gillespy would rather, any day, run the shop than see a launch, notwithstanding that in the present instance the conflicting of the two affairs might practically leave the shop for the most part to run itself.

"Why did n't you stop at the Corners?" the Gladmother asked Ulick.

"Could n't spare so much time. I came down to see you."

"You 've missed something. But I 'm afraid that 's nothing new. You 're in the habit of missing things, are n't you?"

"I suppose we all are. The world is full of things. And nobody can have all of them."

"Every body can have all that belongs to that body," said the Gladmother in her sententious and quaintly accurate English. "And it 's just as unfair to be unfair to one 's self as not to give other folks their proper rights; besides rights being so mixed up that you can hardly ever do the one without the other."

"There does n't seem to be much of the kind of defrauding that comes by not looking out for number one, I think, as the world goes."


"There 's a terrible deal of it," insisted the Gladmother. "There 's a precious few that know what 's best for themselves, let alone taking it. And not knowing, and not taking, is a cheat, every time."

"There does n't appear to be any way of helping it."

"Yes, there 's a way, and it 's always working; only we won't give it the chance, and take our chances."

"Did you send for me to tell me that?" Ulick drew his look inward from the window through which he had been gazing off vaguely, and fixed it with a sudden searchingness upon the Gladmother's quiet face.

"Well, partly," she answered him. "Only of course I did n't know you would put quite so much upon me. That comes of not being fair to yourself. If you had gone to the launch—as the self you are cheating wanted to—you would have heard something—that I thought you 'd better hear. It might have made a difference. Of course, you 'd know it before long; I shall tell you now, myself. But all the same, you have n't taken things as they might have come, and that is what always hinders."



"You are very oracular, Gladmother. Has anything happened — that can possibly concern me?"

He put the question with the effect of a skeptical indifference; really it was with a reckless forcing from her of the worst at once.

"Yes. That is, something has happened. The concerning — whether or not — is your concern. We are all interested. Young Mr. Harrison Henslee and Lilian are engaged. It is to be told to-day."

"Hoo!" said the doctor. But he said it softly. It did not sound as it probably will be pronounced in the reading. It was a sudden, half-articulated breath, peculiar to himself when a new element, of surprise or of consideration, presented itself to apprehension or reasoning. It was the release of tension; it left him cool, controlled.

"I thought it was the other one," he said.

If Mrs. Trubin, or anybody else, supposed that Ulick North would easily betray all he felt or thought upon the moment, when any unforeseen development occurred, they would have failed to take into the account either his idiosyncrasy or his training.

But Mrs. Trubin did not need that he should betray. Dr. North might be as cool as water, but to the Gladmother he was also as transparent.

"I thought you thought so," she remarked serenely, and took up her knitting work from off her lap. He was so transparent at that moment that she felt an instinct of honor not to watch his face.

Not a feature moved; but like a landscape that had lain in shadow, a light broke over it as if a cloud had passed by from between it and the sun.

The Gladmother knitted a row, and turned her ivory needle. Then she looked up.

"Are you glad?" she asked him.

"Certainly I am glad," he said. "I have not outgrown being glad when other people are happy. And I thank you for telling me, Mrs. Trubin."

"Ulick North, I am an old woman."

"As there are but few," he answered, with one of his rarest smiles.

"And you have n't any grandmother. And there's nobody that can take a liberty with you, unless it's me."

"A liberty is a thing that depends on the occasion and the need."

"Now you are oracular. But I suppose it's your business to be, and you don't look fierce. What I want to say is only this: You mean, I think, to be an entirely honest man."

She stated it; she did not ask it. There was not the slightest rising inflection in her voice.

"I certainly do intend to be."

"And to *live* the truth, plain out? And let it be seen and understood, the whole of it, as the truth ought to be?"

"Is that invariably possible? The truth is not even to be spoken, at all times."

"Especially when it has been kept back a good while, and seems to have lost its opportunity?"

"You are a very keen woman, Gladmother."

"I am keen for those I love. You have kept back something, Ulick North, even from yourself — or your permission — until you don't know whether to allow it, or tell it, or not. And I think you owe it to yourself, and most likely to somebody else — not to keep it back much longer."

Dr. North met the gentle boldness of her look with a singular expression, at once of kindly candor and an unrelinquished reticent control.

"You are by no means the creature who rushes in, Mrs. Trubin; but you are clearly not the angel who fears to tread," he told her.

"Not where I am led, or sent," she responded.

CHAPTER LVI.

SHRIFT.

It was suddenly as if the axis of the earth had shifted.

New conditions were to be adapted to, a new course taken.

Ulick North no longer denied to himself the obvious reality. It had been put to him twice from the outside. Mr. Henslee had said to him, "You may leave out something of your own history, putting yourself by so inflexibly;" and the Gladmother had fearlessly declared to him, "You have kept back something that you owe it to yourself — and maybe some one else — not to keep back much longer." And his own honest consciousness, the consciousness of the very gladness that filled his heart in learning that Estabel had not chosen the easy way, and that she "wadna wed the Earlie's son," — for he had never doubted for a moment that she might have done so if she would, — compelled him to as honest a conclusion that he must permit the truth within himself, and make it known to her at the right time, to do with as she would. It belonged to her, and she must have it.

So far was clear; but the right time, and the sure circumstance that could make time right, and the word pertinent? These were not clear.

He knew himself; but after all, what did he know of her, except the outside happening? He had not doubted where the power of choice lay; but what if he had been mistaken? There had been mistake some-

where in his conviction of the matter; what if it had been upon that other side?

She might have cared for the Earlie's son, that which she had expected might not have come to her; she might not, of her own will, have turned from the easy way; it might have proved the barred, impossible way. And what claim had he to ask, that he might know? He had held willfully back from claim; he had shown no personal concern. There would be a long approach to make, to bring him near enough, since he had not kept near when it was too dangerously dear to do so. He called himself a coward and a fool. He had come to his senses, and he could dare, as far as the mere daring went, to be absolutely honest, were it the fair or decent thing to be honest in such a hurry.

He had not been fair to Estabel, nor to himself. He had the long way back to travel that the mistaken or faulty course devolves upon all wanderers. He could not go to Estabel and say, "I have always loved you." He had done nothing to make it possible for her to believe so late and contradictory a word.

It would seem now, to a looker-on, as if things might easily come right. A very little incident ought to do it. Providence or a story-teller might so readily put that incident in, and lo! the story would be told. But it is not so simple a matter for a story-teller, or, it would appear, even for Providence, to adjust square pegs. And square pegs are what we have to deal with.

Dr. North had got it into his head that not only must he take time and be patient, in order to establish such change of base as would allow him to make further movement consistently with his own character and the respect he owed to Estabel, but a scruple had seized him,—a scruple that could have seized no other than just such a man,—that to be utterly honest, he must not only take a new attitude, but present himself without the least disguise to this girl's judgment; let her see him as

perhaps, if she did so see, any glamour of her partial knowledge might fade away, any half-developed sympathies might find themselves brought against a barrier, and conscience, or temperament — her way of looking at things and accounting their relative importance — might interpose against her nearer inclination and his desire.

Long ago his doubts of her, in herself, had vanished. He had confessed to himself that he had found something which he had refused to credit as existing; but he had found it existing in a young, unspoiled, untried nature. He had still refused all easy faith that it might survive its inevitable contact with the world, the flesh, and the devil. These were tangible forces, evident every day; he acknowledged the tangible, and thought he knew in his experience that the unsubstantial fled or yielded before it. He had waited to see if it would so yield in Estabel. But he had seen her grow in grace and moral stature; he had no longer any personal cavil or contradiction for her. It was at this point that he began, with an instinct that he obeyed without analysis, to feel and shun a danger; and the danger grew, and the shunning became a persistence with him, when he had supposed, with all the rest of her little world, that her life was laid out for her, and that in no way could it be of consequence — unless he were weak enough to make it of regretful consequence — to him. He had had enough of regrets, enough of weakness; he buckled his armor on against any further shafts of fate, and thought himself not weak, but strong.

But the doubts of her had sprung from other doubts that had not yet vanished. Exceptions only proved the rule. He was still distrustful, still adrift from happy certainties that he knew she clung to. He was capable of loving her — what a leap, almost of anguish, his strong heart gave as he confessed this to himself! — but he was not capable, or ready, to hold fast, with her, that which is so of inmost love that it becomes knowledge, — a

knowledge that needs be mutual in all derived affections, or else become a separation. For love that is of inmost demands the inmost.

He thought she would demand of him this faith; that she would impute it to him unless he expressly repudiated it. He was too honest to let her do this; he was too honest to agree to believe because other people agreed. He must come to it by conviction. Facts, incongruities, stopped him. The faith of the world seemed to him conventional.

Once Estabel had said to him, "You believe more, Dr. North, than you are willing to believe." And he had replied with another epigram, "I am willing to believe all there is, but nothing there is not, however much I would like it to be."

These things he brought up again, of set purpose, in his resumed occasional visits to the Charlock cottage through those early autumn months. He was careful not to make these visits too frequent of occasion, or — as he thought — of too marked change in character. He came for the Gladmother's asking; it was easy now to come by rail; his stays were brief, but he dropped in among the family as any friendly visitor might. When Dr. North comported himself like other people, he became more exceptional than he was well aware.

He was no longer cynical and slighting to others. Estabel found in him a wonderful transformation, or reversion, to a nobility that was noble enough to be also sweet. But this appeared in spite of his intent; he was very severe and unsparing in all voluntary self-presentation.

It was never difficult to lead the Gladmother's thought and speech to the inner things. It seemed as if Dr. North did this purposely to declare himself outside. Yet if he had been really and absolutely outside — and this Estabel of her keener vision divined — he would have made no sign or inquiry at barred doors.

They had fragments of talk after this fashion:—

"Belief is what a person would be lief to think," Ulick said one day when they were all together, taking up that word, casually spoken.

"Just exactly that," the Gladmother agreed, unexpectedly.

When an adversary drops a bit of argument in that way, the effect is always rather like a step down which one takes as on a supposed level. Dr. North lifted his eyebrows, but said nothing. Mrs. Trubin placidly waited.

"Then you allow that it is choice?" — Ulick put it to her, after the pause. "That every man can make his own belief? To grant that would go far to stop controversy, of course."

"I don't know about that. Everybody would see the same thing in the main, because we're all human, and we all want the same; but each one would see it differently, and so there would always be dispute. But that was n't what you said, and I agreed to."

"Case in point," laughed the doctor. "I said we believe what we would be willing to have true. I'd like it so, and so, belike, it is so. Beliking and belief are pretty much identical."

"Are n't believing and beliving more identical? Don't we have to believe what we can't live without? We believe in the air we breathe, but we don't stop to prove it is there before we take it in. Every baby that is born into the world opens its little lungs with that sort of faith. And so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"Ah, there you come to facts." Dr. North accepted the baby illustration, but postponed the analogy. "Facts are true just as far as they go, but theory is never fact until facts demonstrate it."

"I think theory and fact are very much like the egg and the chicken," said Estabel. "Which comes first?"

"The outcome of that question is that you can't settle it."

"Do we need to settle it?"

"I don't know. I should think sometimes it settled itself. Depends on whether you're trying to hatch eggs, or raise chickens to lay them. In the meantime, for common reasoning and practical purposes, we want facts first. The universe is built on fact."

"Maybe there's something facter than fact."

The Gladmother left the discussion to Estabel with a smile. Ulick North turned more directly to the girl, and answered her quickly. "Factor or fact, I suppose you mean?" he said.

"Perhaps I mean the first fact—in the First Nature. Can any work do without theory? Can your profession, for example?"

"It's the egg and the chicken again. Theory grows from fact, and presupposes other fact. Theory must find its fact, each way. It cannot prove itself."

"I suppose God theorized the world before He made it."

"That may be begging the question. But if He did, the power of proof lay with Him, as we do not find it lies with us."

"No. We only look on, while He shows; and we say what it seems to say to us."

"That is the Word," put in the Gladmother softly, as in aside to herself.

"You define it precisely, Miss Estabel. A theory is a view; in etymological signification, the way somebody looks at a thing. Which brings us back; man knows no further than he sees."

"And sees no further than his nose. Chooty-choo!"

Miss Charlock was more successful with her antithesis than usual; probably because she had only half of it to manage.

Everybody laughed; the gravity of the debate was broken, and it dropped.

Very metaphysical wooing, doubtless, but it was a step in the wooing, none the less; for Ulick had thus far disburthened his conscience. And Estabel was saying secretly within herself, "How true he is! How strong he will be for the faith that is in him, when he finds it out!"

Another time it was a question of observance. It came up with mention of a great preacher of the day, who was stirring minds and hearts with his fresh, free presentations of the verities of life and of human souls; bringing these verities face to face, the one to recognize the other.

Dr. North confessed again. He seized alertly the opportunity of a casual reference to a newspaper paragraph concerning the crowds which were filling the splendid church Sunday after Sunday, and the consequent natural inquiry whether he, Ulick, had heard the man.

"No," he made rough avowal. "I don't run with the machine. I'm not a church-goer."

"One need not always go to church to get the truth," said the Gladmother, refusing to be shocked or remonstrative. "It is always with us. But we want the reminders. That is why the Bible is the Book of Life."


"I'm not much of a Bible reader, either," persisted the doctor. "That is, as a matter of routine or obligation. I've rather an idea that there's a Bible in every man's experience, as he goes along."

"That was how the Bible got written, 'aforetime, for our learning,'" remarked the Gladmother quietly. "A ship's captain takes an observation every day," she added, with a keen, kind look over her glasses at Ulick.

"Yes. To find out where he is. Morally, we need not be at a loss. We have conscience."

"The captain has his chronometer."

Estabel's eyes shone, and she took up the word.



"We can't live by dead reckoning, you see. We want the sun and stars."

Ulick North regarded her with something more of intensity than he was aware.

"Yes, we want the stars. Thank God, we have them. The heavens set the watch for us, after all. I allow that. But I don't quite admit the parallel. There's a vast deal of mechanical repetition, and not a little heaving to in mid-course, for soundings that don't sound, and observance that isn't true heavenly observation. I object to formalities, and concessions to a mere established expectation. So I have got out of the way — for that reason, and from other causes — of public worshiping. At least," he added lightly, "I escape being a Pharisee — so far as in not going up to the temple to pray."

"The temple — and the closet — are God's place in ourselves. We can't keep out of that," replied the Gladmother.

"I'd rather hear you preach than Dr. Freebold," said Ulick gently. "All the same, I don't pretend to be a religious man, after the common understanding. I'm too busy living."

"That's very good religion — as far as it goes," was the Gladmother's placid rejoinder.

Plainly, she would not be shocked, if he had wished to shock her. She lived too broadly in her own whole nature.

"*But*" — she went on, emphasizing the little conjunction with which she linked to her admission the completing half of its perfect truth — "a good workman looks to his Master all the time."

"He is n't all the time talking to him," Ulick maintained, as nearly with a scoff as would have been sincere to his real mood. "A soldier does n't ask questions or make explanations in the ranks. His duty is in doing. And he does n't need, nor expect, to get his

orders over and over, or to reason out to his own satisfaction the whole plan of the campaign. He just marches and fights, according to the moment's command."

"As far as that goes," the old lady repeated, "it is good religion. But it is n't the whole, or the happiest, of our concern with the Lord. There, we have privileges. Every man is a special one with Him, and not just a piece of the rank and file. He *asks* us to come and tell Him things. He means to show us all things that He does. He is n't too great to take us into his confidence; He wants us to understand Him. He is telling us of Himself all the time, and how can we help telling ourselves back?"

"Is n't life speech? And an infinite knowledge might preclude, one would think, our telling."

Again Estabel's eyes flashed up. Again there was something on her lips to say, but she hesitated in the saying. Dr. North's look met hers, and held it.

"Well?" he asked her, and his tone claimed her thought, gently, but with an eagerness. He had not seemed to be watching her, but he had lost no change nor stir of her face; he had felt her reception of every word. How else, when all through whatever talk it was his heart seeking to lay itself open to the verdict of hers?

"I was thinking," she answered him slowly, "it seemed to me so very simple. If you cared very much for anybody, and they cared very much for you, and all your life was more or less influenced by them," — in her effort at impersonality she quite freed herself from all bondage to pronouns, — "would you be willing to go through the world without any direct saying of it?"

"It might not be possible for me to do otherwise," Dr. North replied, with a suddenness and a certain curious shifting of tone, as quitting abstract argument to

confront the personal application. "Circumstances — or my nature — might not allow."

"There's one thing pretty likely to be certain," said Estabel, cheerfully incognizant. "People who don't speak easily mean more when they do speak than those who are talking all the time."

She looked up at him with a gay, frank triumph, as if she had pierced through his armor of antagonism, and understood himself better than his cavil.

It gave him a sudden pleasant sense of absolution.

He had discharged his conscience; it might be he need not cavil so very scrupulously much more.

And, somehow, the passing of a certain resolved tension from the set of his features, and the overspread of a quiet relaxation, were more to her than word or actual smile in answer.

He did not know that he had answered; he shut the response within himself, recalling himself altogether from the discussion; and after his peculiar fashion already noted said something quite irrelevant and commonplace, that was very like the dropping of a latch when one has closed a door.

"Do you clearly comprehend that man?" Aunt Esther asked of Mrs. Trubin that day when he had gone.

"Some ways, I do," the old lady answered.

"Must be precious little ways, seems to me," returned Miss Charlock. "He's mighty deliberate. When folks get good an' ready, things ain't always pat, according; and things don't always come according, just when folks get good an' ready. Guess my cake needs turning." And with these semi-detached utterances she departed to her kitchen.

CHAPTER LVII.


LADY OF HENSLEIGH.

No one could mistake the meaning of Estabel's bright face and buoyant bearing in these days of wedding preparation for anything but their direct, innocent significance,—a pure pleasure and an infinite content. The theory of any possible personal disappointment or setting aside of self in sacrifice fell to pieces of its own weight. It was not so inevitable that the sign should be read clear through. She did not stop to read it so herself. Everything beautiful had come easily to pass, so far; the future was full of beautiful peradventures hastening on their way. Our moods are both prescient and reflective; the touching of a single chord, of pain or joy, echoes all that we have known, or rings on to all we hope, of either; and sometimes the touch is such a slight and subtle thing that we know not why we are either sad or gay.

Estabel did not ask, and nobody about her guessed, what was the happy secret behind her happiness just now. A bird in her bosom stirred softly, and sang; that was all, —not its whole song; only the little pulsing music of the waiting notes that should make the perfect melody; a breathing of them under breath, as the bird twitters in the nest at daybreak.

Why was not the keynote given to which it would have fully waked and answered?

Why was not somebody, in Aunt Esther's quaint and homely phrasing, "good and ready" while everything was so "according"?



Why should the life music have had to hush itself again in a repressive doubt?

Dr. North was content, also; he was not refusing his own life obstinately any more, as he had done. He was only giving it time, he thought, to come reasonably and fairly to its fulfillment. A little longer, and he would speak, if no further forbidding silenced him. It was pleasant to drift, just now, with all these pleasant things, as if they might not, after all, be discrepant with his own faring and allotment. He would not startle Estabel, nor risk his hope, by inconsistent precipitation; let this present engrossment have its day, and pass on; by and by might come a day that should be all theirs; he would wait the fitting, more confident time; for the now, he was content.

So he proposed, and made no reckoning of other strange disposal.

The wedding was as simple as a wedding could be. Various suggestions had been made about it; it had been a little difficult to plan with perfect suitableness and due regard to circumstance. House or church — Topthorpe or Stillwick — the world kept out or the world let in — these were questions that had to be settled, and that did not in the ordinary ways settle themselves.

Mrs. Brithwaite had asked Lilian and the Gladmother to come to her for a visit in which all needed preparation could be made, and which the ceremony should conclude. This came nearest to satisfaction of anything, save what was finally decided. It was the Gladmother who at last put the matter in clear, positive light.

"I think," she said to Harry, "that you don't need to build a bridge. Your life and hers have met. You take her where you find her, and you just lead her over the line. Then you will both be at home, in your own

place, and the new way of living will begin. Is n't the best way to do a thing the straightest? Lilian has n't anybody but me, and she has no home but this, where we have been made welcome together; but a bride goes out from her own family and home to be a wife, and not from the home of any third person, if it can be helped, and of all third persons, if we had to think of it in that way, Miss Charlock has the right."

And Harry and his father and Miss Henslee all agreed that the Gladmother's word was the fit one, and not to be gainsaid.

Stillwick was so beautiful in that sweet Indian summer weather! All through November it was prolonged, and lent itself graciously to the plans that took shape readily enough, around the one fixed point, as plans do, when that is given.

They were married at the cottage. The world waited. Its time was not quite yet. The rector of the little church in Tophthorpe where the Gladmother and Lilian had attended, where Lilian had been taught in Sunday school, and later been confirmed in the inheritance of Christ's "whole blessed company," came down to join their hands and pronounce the priestly sanction.

Only Mrs. Brithwaite and Mary and Ulick North, from Tophthorpe; and Miss Eliza Gillespy, with a few other Stillwick friends — the kind old doctor and the village pastor, with their wives, — the good minister being given an "assisting" bit of the service, and astonished by what he afterward found in the envelope slipped into his hand — were present, in addition to the family on each side.

Miss Charlock's modest rooms were fresh with pure white hangings, and lovely with rare flowers sent in a great hamper by the bridegroom. The parlor fireplace was filled with chrysanthemums, white and golden; over this the mantel was banked with roses; clusters and wreaths of blossoms and greenery knotted the window

draperies and fell lightly among their delicate folds. In the kitchen beyond, transformed for the service, all the evidences of coarser occupation were hidden beneath and behind similar screenings, and the pretty table, not wanting in fine old furnishings, stood in the midst, with the wedding cake and wine, and more substantial viands for those who had come the longer way, or any who might find such acceptable. There was no pretense, but daintiness and dignity — the dignity that comes of unpretense — had met together. Sweet autumn airs and odors and fair, bright sunshine stole in everywhere, and wafted through, and made the little place like the heart of an encircling fragrance and beauty, as is the heart of a blossom to its corolla.

And all the beautiful world, with its hope and promise, reaching out from this dear, quiet centre, was theirs this day.

The bridegroom and the company waited in the flower-garlanded room. The Gladmother's chair stood in the western window. Over it hung a tassel cluster of her prisms, dropping from among the sprays of rose and smilax, held by a loop of white satin ribbon. Through these the first westering sunbeam slanted, and then flung across the corner where the wedding group would stand soft streams of color that fell among the roses on the mantel and burned upward from them in flame of red and gold, plume-tipped with vivid green and heavenly violet, such as no altar-light could radiate in compare.

There were steps upon the stairway, a soft rustle of women's gowns. A quiet-faced old lady in a snowy cap and full, soft bosom-lace, with a delicate white shawl over her black silk robing, stood in the entrance. Just behind her was a glimpse as of a floating, fleecy cloud.

Mr. Henslee, standing near, moved forward, offering his arm, and led the Gladmother to her place beside

her chair. Harry met his bride upon the threshold, took her hand in his, and side by side they slowly walked across the floor, Estabel and Aunt Esther following at unobtrusive distance, and ranging themselves near, but not in evidence as with, the marriage party. The clergyman, in his white surplice, stood in the angle of the room that had been draped across with some soft hanging of deep maroon, flanked either way with tall chrysanthemum plants, making it like a tiny chancel. Before him, on a long, low cushion, the bridal pair knelt for a moment, then rose up, and the service began.

While the solemn, beautiful words were spoken, all hearts stirred, yet all eyes observed. A marriage ceremony is a heavenly reality in such external type as earth can make most heavenly. A woman is never nearer apparent angelhood than at this one supreme moment of her life. And I suppose if one saw a vision of angels, one would *see*, desiring to know what angels look like, and not listen only. Saint John in the Apocalypse took notice of the white robes and the wings.

Never was bride more bridelike than sweet Lilian Hawtree, in the moment when she was ceasing to be Lilian Hawtree and taking her foretokened name and place as "Lady of Hensleigh."

She had found some shimmery, sheeny stuff of silken tissue; lacelike, with little spots of satin weft delicately dropped upon it; it was like gossamer sprinkled with dew. Of this she had made both gown and veil; not preposterously long, to drag reluctant yards behind as if protestant against some half intent, or absurdly to fill the comparatively small spaces of Aunt Esther's house. The folds swept lightly off a little way and made their own soft circle on the floor, needing no tirewoman's last touch at the doorway nor a maid of honor's cunning adjustment at the turning round; the

veil fell back from the bright hair upon which it rested, fastened on one side by a clustering spray of starry jessamine, and on the other with a diamond pin, the gift of the elder Mr. Henslee, and reached only a graceful length as veil, and not as robing. Jessamine flowers were her lovely breastknot; she carried nothing in her hands. There was nothing to relieve her of; she wore no glove, even, to be taken off. A sweet, simple girl, in simple, natural array, she stood there; all herself, and the quiet sincere expression of herself, and not a mysterious something hidden in a heap of millinery. It was herself, not any apparition or disguise of herself, that she was going to give, and that without hesitation, or hamper of useless technicality. There was nothing that had needed the mockery of a "rehearsal."

For the formal bestowal, there was the stately sweet old Gladmother, who at the word stepped softly to her child, and laid her hand in Harry's; then the measured tones of the clergyman, and the full echo of Harry's voice, and the clear low repetition of Lilian's in turn, went on. And in the few instants in which the most momentous things — is that why they are called so? — do oftenest transpire, it was all done, and the gentle village pastor blessed them with upraised hands, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

There was no orchestral or organ march, from Mendelssohn or Wagner; only a sweet silence for a moment, as the pair turned happy solemnized faces to each other first with their new greeting, and then to the nearest and dearest of the friendly company. Loving embraces, a gentle buzz of congratulation and good wishes, and presently relief from tender strain in pleasant, common talk.

An hour later nearly all were gone. Lilian, with Estabel to help her, had withdrawn and laid aside her dreamlike bridal draperies, putting on instead a gown of some soft woolen, pale olive-gray, fastened at throat

and belt with golden clasps; and with a light cloak of corresponding color over her arm, and a hat with olive ribbons and a tuft of goldenrod which her own fingers had fashioned, hung upon her wrist, had come down again to say a short, sweet good-by to those who had the last, lingering right; and had simply walked with Harry through the open house and out at the garden door, whence the footpath led off into the orchard and down the brookside. By themselves they followed the still fragrant way beneath the pines, where they had first met, and begun to love, and where the love had been confessed.

And it was in the golden twilight of a serenely fading day, that they came together up the lawn to the open entrance and the waiting, eager welcome and service of house and faithful household at old Henslee Place.

Dr. North had lingered with the Gladmother. She had said, "Don't go," when the carriage guests were all departing. And he had looked at his watch and seen that there was yet half an hour before his train, and had waited, with the complaisance that in him meant a very sure complacence.

When he did take leave, Aunt Esther and Estabel went out with him upon the doorstone.

Aunt Esther said good-by, and then as with some sudden thought betook herself inside again. Estabel found herself, she hardly knew how, walking down the little pathway under the elms at Ulick's side. He had moved forward without saying the final good-by that would have left her where she stood.

"Has n't it been a lovely time?" she asked him. It might have been perfunctory, by way of saying something; but her face was all abrim with tranquil gladness, that spoke the strong, pervading sense out of which only some such words could come.

He looked down at her, reading the truth of her delight; and his own feeling of the joy and beauty let itself respond.

"It has been a *wedding*—not a parade," he said. "It has been as such things should be."

They were at the gate, but he still paused, with his hand upon the rail.

"And so they are going off in the Goldenrod?" he interrogated.

"Yes. It is to be an ideal voyage; more like a yachting than a merchant trip, though they are to carry cargo, too, of course; there will be a stop for landing that and taking on another; but they are to cruise a little besides; back through the West Indies in the pleasant weather there, and so on home into our springtime. It's all summer with them now," she ended, with a little ring in her voice that was very joyous, yet with the touch joy has of feeling close to happy tears.

"Has not the Gladmother been beautiful?" she hurried to say further, for a difference.

"She does not think of herself," said Dr. North.

"She declares she does; and that is why she wants it all just so. She told them they could not leave her if they tried; she was going, too. 'Why should n't I have my share of it? Why should you wait till I am done with everything—or till it seems so?' For she never will allow that anybody is ever done with the least bit of their life. 'And as to this winter, what winter could I spare you better from just the speaking and the seeing? I shall be older next year, and the next; the longer you wait, the more you will be afraid. Go, and have a good time, for me to enjoy with you. I could n't get it any other way.' That was how she talked to them, and how it was all settled."

"It would be nice if there were enough such selfishness in the world to settle everything so," Dr. North

answered, still looking into the uplifted face, not heeding how the visor was down from before his own, in which a strange, unwonted tenderness was shining.

Estabel took it all to mean his understanding of the beautiful Gladmother. It was so good to see him quite understand a thing like that! And yet there was something that made her still hurry on, with other change of word.

"They sail on the nineteenth. Won't you be there to see them off — with us?"

"Yes. I will be there — with you," said Dr. North; and he pushed open the little gate. There was no time, nor fittingness, for more speech now. He said good-night and walked away.

Estabel stood still under the trees.

"He is growing willing, I do believe, to 'behave *himself*' with me. He talks to me as he would to anybody else!"

She thought it, in those words, in that way. A great bound of exultation was in her heart. She supposed she was blessedly content to think just that.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE SAILING OF THE GOLDENROD.

Down at L wharf the carriages of gay people gathered again and stood in waiting.

The delicious weather had lasted; the blue of the sky melted down to the horizon rim where the far water of the bay made its deeper line against it. The Goldenrod had been hauled around the pier, from within the angle of the L, and lay beside its outer inverted arm. The tide had just turned, and was sweeping outward; a westerly breeze was blowing. Windlass and halyards were manned; the captain stood upon the afterdeck, alert, supreme, holding his watched-for word to the precise instant. By the bulwark, shoreward, were Lilian and Harry, and Mr. Henslee, who would go down the harbor with them. Above them floated again the blue diamond, the union jack, the barque's bright signal, and the stars and stripes.

"Heave away!" And the men at the capstan bent to their bars; the chain rattled through the hawse-hole; the anchor was hoisted and cat-headed. Without pause came rapid orders, that only the sailors comprehended, but to which the winged vessel fluttered out all her sudden bravery like a splendid moth unfolding from its chrysalis; the white sails were run up to their yards, with a "chock ablock and belay;" they swelled out with the gentle wind; the great H in the foretopsail showed grandly clear upon the smooth-stretched sheet; a cheer went up from the wharf; with, and above all, — rattling and hauling and call and cheer, — rang the

lusty chorus of the crew, singing as they answered to command with tug and strain, —

“Oh, the Goldenrod is taut and fine,
The dandy ship of the Diamond Line.”

And down into the stream she swept, the two young figures standing in the stern for lingering exchange of loving watch and waving sign; and with wind and tide and well-set canvas she moved on, swift and statelily, in outset of her fair, bright voyage,—toward the warm gulf waters, and into the vigorous, waiting trades, and the splendid tropics.

And then the little admiring, friendly crowd upon the wharf broke up, and the carriages drove away, and Estabel went back to Casino Crescent with Miss Henslee.

And Dr. North had not been there.

A whim? Or a patient? Dr. North was liable to both, but it had been neither.

He had come back from a second round of visits; the first had been made very early, before his morning office hour, to urgent cases; the last had just left him time for some renewal of his toilet and to reach L wharf a little before the hour of sailing. As he brushed his hat and took up his gloves, the bell rang. He met the comer upon his doorstep, his intent of departure evident, to say nothing of a slight frown of interruption that involuntarily drew his brows together.

“I am afraid I must excuse myself, unless” — then he looked the visitor full in the face, and recognized him, although he was a person he had seldom seen. “Oh, Mr. Steeples, I believe? I have an appointment; but if a few minutes will serve you — please walk in.”

Mr. Steeples came in, silent, solemn.

“A few minutes will serve,” he said, when the door had been shut, and Dr. North had motioned him to a

chair. "But my errand will involve more than that later, and some very unexpected consequences. My late partner — your uncle — I grieve to tell you, was in that terrible railway accident in the south of France three weeks ago which we read of a few days since. I have letters by the English steamer just arrived, from our consul at Marseilles. They were on their way to Pau for the winter. I suppose you know they passed the summer in the Tyrol, after their travels last year in Italy and the East. They would probably have come home in the spring."

Mr. Steeples had prolonged his circumstantial statement, to give Ulick time. Now he sat silent again, but with the air of a man who has yet more to say.

Dr. North was severely shocked by the sudden announcement. Like all persons of carefully guarded feeling, the thrust against which he braced himself ran the deeper. For a minute or two he was silent also, and Mr. Steeples waited. Then, when Ulick did not speak, he began again.

"It is a great blow — to us all," he said.

"Where is Mrs. Clymer?" Ulick asked him calmly. He felt no need to express his sense of personal pain and loss to this man of business, to whom Mr. Clymer had been only his "late partner."

"Mrs. Clymer died in Marseilles a few days after," Mr. Steeples replied. "She had been ill at Nice; and the horrible shock — and some bodily injury that might not otherwise have proved fatal — well, it was the end; they're *both gone*!"

Mr. Steeples emphasized those last words. They involved the later and very weighty practical consequences to which he had transiently adverted, and which he left to suggest themselves at leisure to Dr. Ulick North, in their natural order; as in legal course they would certainly with brief delay be set before him in his position as next of kin. Whatever, more or less, he

might himself know of the particular provisions of the peculiar document to which his name afterward appeared appended as witness, it seemed wiser and more decorous to hint nothing in anticipation, beyond the fact which might be taken for granted.

As he turned with his foot upon the sidewalk for that gesture and word of final leavetaking which people are apt to supplement, he said briefly: —

“Undoubtedly there is a will. Perhaps two. Mrs. Clymer, I believe, had something of her own, apart from whatever” — He left that sentence broken. He could not baldly speak of what might have accrued to her right in those few, widowed, dying days. “You will probably hear from his lawyers, Lylowe and Spring. Good-day.”

Dr. North went back into his office and sat down.

CHAPTER LIX.

INHERITANCE.

'CHANGE was crowded. Mr. Henslee could not walk up the street without encountering the news from a dozen lips. Topthorpe was stirred in its business centre. Abel Clymer was a man who would be missed here; and there was a horror in the violent, sudden death, which men were hardly yet inured to putting aside so easily as they seem to do to-day. People were not crushed or drowned or burned up quite so often, or so by wholesale, then.

There was hardly such a strenuous hum of eager talk as ordinarily along the curbstones; there was not much lifting of sharp, quick tone, or breaking forth of occasional laughter at shrewd jokes. A hand was laid upon the strings.

Mr. Henslee passed on and across to his home in Casino Crescent with a slow step and a troubled heart. He was thinking of the little girl there, fresh from her happy participation in the joy of the setting off, that was yet tender with the sense of parting, and of that human uncertainty against which our prayers go up for those who leave us on whatever glad and hopeful errand. He had noted a grave little curve of the lip that told of some such qualifying of keen pleasure, as Estabel had turned away from the deserted pier and gone back to the carriage with Miss Lucy.

He would tell his sister; but Estabel should not be told to-day. One of her homes was gone; one of only two near relatives was taken from her. Whatever of

essential sympathy might have been sometimes lacking between her Aunt Vera and herself — however uncongenial in certain ways a home with her might have been, — she would feel this sadly; the more sadly, he knew, that there had not been that perfect love which not only casteth out fear, but the sharpest pain of such regret.

No; she should not be told to-day; she should not have everything to bear at once.

And even as he thought so, the “consequences” and the questions of them, that must come, occurred to him. She must soon know, and she must soon act. On one side and the other, she and Ulick North represented all that in common course of affairs would result from this double death.

And Abel Clymer had died first. The man of affairs discerned in a single mental glance how things might be.

He was not surprised when, a few days later, after Estabel had calmed and been comforted from her first distress, word came from Messrs. Lylowe and Spring of the necessity for attending to the matters of the estate. They had in their possession the will of the late Abel Clymer, Esq., executed before his departure for Europe; the parties interested, and to be duly served with copies, were Ulysses North, physician, of Topthorpe, as heir-at-law and under the will of said Abel Clymer, and Estabel Charlock, next of kin and heir to estate of Perseverance Clymer, wife of the aforesaid. A meeting would be held at such place as the parties might desire, preliminary to the offering of the will for probate.

And in the library of Mr. Henslee in Casino Crescent, in the presence of these formal, legal men, and with only the kind friend and host to feel with and for them the overshadowing solemnity of the call that brought them so together, Ulick and Estabel met for the first time since that wedding afternoon when they

had stood by the gate under the great elms at Stillwick, and Ulick had said, meaning it so differently, "Yes; I will be there — with you."

It was a curious, short will which Mr. Lylowe read aloud to them.

After the usual preliminaries it ran thus: "I leave to my dear wife, Perseverance Clymer, my house on Mount Street, Tophthorpe, with all household furnishings, books, pictures, plate, and all works of art or ornament, there or elsewhere. And of all other estate of which I may die possessed, real, personal and mixed, I leave to the said Perseverance Clymer, my wife, one clear and undivided half, to her sole use, behoof, and disposal.

"And I leave one clear and undivided half of all my estate, real, personal, and mixed, after the deduction of the house in Mount Street, the furnishings, books, pictures, plate, etc., as aforesaid and bequeathed, to my nephew, Ulysses North, out of which estate he is to pay, first, all my lawful debts and obligations; second, all moral liabilities which, according to his theories of use and possession, and his acute sense of radical justice, he may feel that I have overlooked or neglected, and that should consequently be imposed upon the same. I lay upon the said Ulysses North the whole trust and responsibility and discretionary power of executing this intent and charge. And any residue that, after the fulfillment of these conditions, may remain of said half of my estate so intrusted to the said Ulysses North, shall be retained by him for his own sole use and disposal.

"With these bequests, I leave to all my affectionate good-will and wishes."

There was a silence in the room when the lawyer ceased his reading. Ulick North's lips were compressed; there was a whiteness about them, but his eyes were clear and calm. He sat absolutely still.

Estabel glanced from one to another with a frightened, half-comprehending look.

"What does it all mean?" Her question broke the pause tremulously, as she turned to Mr. Henslee in distressed appeal.

Mr. Lylowe took two folded papers from the table beside him, and arose. Dr. North rose also, as the lawyer approached him, tendering one.

"It means, for my part," he said distinctly, "that my uncle has given me a test for myself. I accept the challenge and the trust." He quietly put the paper into the inside pocket of his coat, and remained standing where he was, as though only waiting, business being ended, to take proper leave.

"It means, my dear young lady," said Mr. Lylowe as he came before Estabel and held to her the second copy of the document, "that through your aunt, who survived her husband by several days, and who has left no will, you inherit by law a very — handsome — property. On that point I congratulate you."

"Oh, don't!" cried out the girl, as if he had struck her a blow. "I don't understand it yet, but it can't be right. It is not mine. I cannot take it. It ought all to go to Dr. North, except the little property that was Aunt Vera's before."

"I don't think you can give it up, my dear," Mr. Henslee said to her, in a low, soothing tone. "At any rate, it is of no use to say so now. The proper forms must be gone through; then we will talk about it."

The lawyer had to lay the paper in her lap; she extended no hand to take it. Mr. Henslee lifted it up and rose, giving his arm to Estabel. "You have had enough to-day, little girl," he said, with a tender lightness. "We will go to Cousin Lucy now."

Ulick stood before them as they reached the door.

"It is precisely as my uncle meant it should be. It is perfectly clear and fair — and unalterable."

He held out his hand to Estabel. She put hers within it, and looked up at him with a helpless remorse. His face was as quiet as his words. The touch of his hand was kind, not warm.

A distance had stretched out again between these two. Perhaps it had been meant otherwise, but a word from the grave had separated them again.

"How stern he is! And how *can* I ever make him understand me, now?" was in Estabel's thought as she passed up the stairs out of his sight.

How could he tell Estabel Charlock now that he loved her?

That question smote upon Ulick North its interdict as he left the house.

The lawyer gathered up his papers. Mr. Henslee came down to offer courteous leave-taking.

"There might be one very pretty way of making all this straight," said Mr. Lylowe, as he buttoned up his coat in the hall.

"If that pretty way were ever open, I'm afraid it is closed now," Mr. Henslee answered.

Mr. Lylowe shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose one can guess, but I can't see clearly what it's all about. Will North get anything, or nothing, in the winding up?"

"That will depend upon his understanding of the conditions, and their limit," replied Mr. Henslee.

"He strikes me as a fellow who will take the stiffest possible way of meeting things."

"And perhaps the hardest for himself. There are such men in the world," rejoined the merchant; and the man of formula and tape departed.

CHAPTER LX.

COMFORT AND COUNSEL.

It was as if an avalanche had fallen into Estabel Charlock's quiet life. The face of everything was changed. She stood as in the middle of an overthrow, not knowing how to extricate herself, or how to reconcile and adapt herself to new conditions. What had not been destroyed was jarred, shaken. She felt as if she could hold fast to nothing — nothing, that is, to which any new tendrils of her growth and being were reaching out; nothing that had to do with plan and purpose.

And it had all begun with such a tragedy! A sorrowful thing, upon which other things so pressed and hurried that they would not give her time and place fitly to think of it and be sorry.

Her Aunt Vera had written her not very infrequently, but when the letters came they had been full of place and circumstance and little detail, in name and on the surface; transitions hither and thither; practical accommodation or inconvenience; general phrases of description; — not much dwelt on minutely except personalities and the ever-growing catalogue of wonderful purchases, the opportunity and way of them; garments; household stuffs; curios, eagerly commented upon for their genuineness and rarity; such as "hardly anybody else, in our country, at least, could boast of having and would be invaluablely attractive to the most superior class of persons;" pictures, after the same order and appraisal; jewels — "Uncle Abel had been so generous to

her; he had wanted to buy almost everything; they should come home laden with precious things, and a great many boxes and cases were already on their way, consigned to their home agents." All this had oppressed Estabel in the mere recital. Now the whole burden of possession and administration was falling upon her heart and hands.

And Aunt Vera — who had been so kind, so loving in her way, so generous with bestowal of all that she accounted benefit — had gone away from all with empty hands, into — would it be to her light or darkness?

The last news had been from the Tyrol. They had traveled through Russia in the early summer. Mrs. Clymer was not only bringing home curios and splendors, but a record of accomplishment of unusual routes — Nishni-Novgorod, the Great Fair — oh, the magnificent Siberian sables, and the exquisite malachites and aquamarines that Mr. Clymer had bought for her there! — Moscow, St. Petersburg, Cronstadt, Lubec, Berlin, Vienna — rapid journeying and short stops; and now a few weeks among these deep valleys and these tremendous mountains, and these queer people. Then by Trieste and Genoa to Marseilles, and through the south of France toward the Pyrenees.

That was the plan marked out, and followed almost to the end; and here, in such safe and common way-faring, — after the Nile, and the desert, the camels, the Persian caravans, the tideless, stormy Caspian, the Volga River, the Baltic Sea, the Alpine passes, — on the quiet Mediterranean shore, within easy hail, they felt, of home, the end had come indeed; their journey on was in the spirit, in the land whence no one comes to tell the way that he has been; and the things of earth that they had gathered remained for other hands to receive wonderingly, perplexedly, and to do with as might seem possible or good.

One little pair of unaccustomed, reluctant hands.

"It is too much," Estabel said. "It frightens me. Oh, how could Aunt Vera want it all? And what did she mean to do with it?" And then her thought would turn back with its reproach upon herself. "If I could only have pleased her better!" she would say.

"You can please her now," said the Gladmother.

"If I did n't know how then, how can I know how now?" Estabel asked, with pathetic simplicity of words. "The things that seemed to please her—I mean what she wished for me"—and here her voice broke, and she stopped.

"You forget the difference, my dear. She is n't in the thing-world now; she's in the heart of things. And it's in the heart—where you do understand her when you say she wished the things for you—that you can go straight to the real best of her, and of it all. It's only the best and the right that lives on. She's got the new sight now, and she sees different from what she did—in some ways. We all shall. But the love is always there. We don't realize how much we may do, to finish up for, and to help on, those that have left the place in things to us, and gone up into the meanings."

"Oh, you dear Gladmother!"

Estabel was comforted, and took courage.

With Mr. Henslee she had other talks. He was her strongest friend and adviser, besides being one of the executors of Mr. Clymer's will.

"You will have to help me find out what to do with it," she said. "The most of it is Remnant."

"Is what?" Mr. Henslee lifted his eyebrows, and his eyeglasses jumped off his nose.

Estabel laughed. "That which is left over, after a person has got enough. Don't you remember—or did n't you hear? We came to that definition once,

and I have n't forgotten it. I think things are planted in people's minds for what they are to grow to by and by. Don't you?" The slight laugh quivered away on her lip. This was not a glad business to her yet, if it could ever be.

Mr. Henslee did not answer that last little question, but spoke to the former purpose. He began to see that he had a mind to deal with in which certainly things had been planted that began to show. Whether they should all be let flourish to the full, or might need to be thinned out, he was not quite sure.

"The responsibility is not yours, immediately," he told her. "Things have got to be put together, into shape, and taken care of, before you will know just where you are. And for another thing, you are not of age. There will have to be a guardian."

"Oh, dear Mr. Henslee, I am so glad! I never thought of that. You will be my guardian, won't you? You will help me think—and help me do. For I can certainly make plans, and I know you will not hinder them. Please don't let us keep anything waiting that can't wait. It will be almost two years."

"And in those two years much may happen that we must allow for."

"Yes. I might die. So we must work. Can't I make a will?"

"Not yet—legally."

"Law is very hard," said Estabel thoughtfully. "It makes things wrong that are really right, and"—Miss Charlock's funny non-reversals occurred to her, and she ended with another little laugh—"things that are really right it makes out to be wrong."

Mr. Henslee put on his eyeglasses again and regarded her with an incomprehension that was all but anxious. Had this strain of feeling and thinking been too much for her?

"That is only Aunt Esther," she explained, still

playfully. "She always says a thing right over again, end for end. I think it is a pretty emphatic way."

"There are other things that may happen besides dying. You may have others to think of. You may marry. Then your husband would have rights, and would be your guardian."

"I don't think I ever shall," she said gravely. "I want you for my guardian now. And I shall make a will, and as soon as I am of age I shall execute it myself."

"I am glad that you will have these two years. You will learn that wills are apt to need a good many codicils," was wisely all that Mr. Henslee replied.

"There is one thing quite clear beforehand," the girl said. "This cannot all — this whole half of Uncle Clymer's money — belong to me. It was a great mistake in the will. If it had been even half, after those things were paid that are to be taken out of Dr. North's share, it would still have been too much. He ought to have two thirds, by real right. And somehow you must have it managed so. It must be kept separate until he can be made to take it. I don't know how, or when; I must leave that to you. You must get round it for me."

"Dr. North is a very hard person to get round," said Mr. Henslee. "And I'm afraid there is n't anything in the Revised Statutes to help us — at present."

CHAPTER LXI.

EXECUTORSHIP.

MR. HENSLEE had rather a hard time between these heirs-at-law and the conditions of the will. He had to talk to Dr. North very much as he had done to Estabel.

"You must not be Quixotic about this thing," he said. "The literal debts are a mere nothing. Mr. Clymer paid as he went. And the sort of payment that you seem resolved to undertake is a simple chimera. It was an odd humor of his — a retort that could not be retorted on — that was all he meant. If it makes you the more conscientious in your use of your superfluity, well enough; it is what we all ought to be. But to try and track out omissions — possible shortcomings in the stricter duty — of an ended life, of whose particulars you can know so little — it seems to me both futile and absurd."

"I shall find out. Not everything, probably, but all I can; and I don't doubt I shall find enough. To begin with, there are all those mechanics who lost their honest pay through Brace and Buckle. And there may be people among those whom my uncle employed — whose labor helped to build up and carry out the enterprises that made him rich — who have had but their meagre labor pay out of the results, and who ought to share in the success; and some, very likely — honest, struggling men — who were his debtors when he died, for borrowed money that the estate can better lose than they can on a stringent summons pay; to say nothing of high interests that books may show, or loans that

have been redeemed but have left the borrowers poor; to say nothing, further yet, of opportunities that may be guessed and traced, that might have kept the surplus down. I told him, Mr. Henslee, that if a man did the right thing all along, there would n't be much danger of superfluous accumulation. It was this, and no joke, that he meant. And I meant what I said."

Mr. Henslee's face changed as he listened. When Ulick spoke of the mechanics, and of Brace and Buckle, he smiled a little curiously; as the doctor went on with his suppositions and made manifest his thorough intent, he looked at him with a sincere, honoring, though still qualified, sympathy. For here, truly, was a man of glorious sincerity, yet all the more to be looked out for, and hindered from extreme enthusiasm of sacrifice.

"Certainly," he said, "one duty of your uncle's was to yourself. You need not ignore that. You must at least reserve a reasonable provision, such as you would have made in his place. You may have those to whom you, in turn, will owe it as a duty. You may marry."

And at this same point to which he had carried the argument with Estabel, Dr. North replied in effect precisely as she had done.

"I'm not a marrying man," he answered shortly.

Then Mr. Henslee even ventured further. "I don't know what to do with you two," he declared, with a recourse to lightness. "Estabel Charlock is bent on very similar dispositions. And she regards you as her chief creditor. She thinks she comes unfairly by what ought in far larger proportion to have been yours. Marriage might settle this whole matter," he said outrightly, as he would not have done if he had had less in his thought than the best good of these two odd young persons who, he began to surmise, were shy in all things of the best good to themselves.

"Marriage can have nothing whatever to do with the question," Dr. North replied, with the calmest decision.

Estabel demanded to see Dr. North. Mr. Henslee had only told her that he was impracticable; that he would have nothing more, and that he probably would not keep what he had, any longer than to fling it away as fast as he could find any pretext. "I must say, however," he added, "that his search for pretexts is a noble one, although most people would think it as fantastic as the search for the Holy Grail."

"If they would think *that* fantastic!" returned Estabel. "Has n't everybody a Holy Grail to find?"

She was staying again now in Casino Crescent. She had been home, for she felt her place was with the Gladmother as far as possible, while Lilian was away. The young Mrs. Henslee had left loving charge with her, and had said to Dr. North, "You, too, will watch her kindly, won't you?"

It was curious how the very different sorts of trust were forcing Estabel and Ulick together. And yet both — the one because she would not let him feel forced toward her, and the other because neither feeling nor relentless scruple would permit him to be drawn — were holding themselves, as to any voluntary movement or sign, apart.

Purely on business, Estabel sent Dr. North a message that if he could find it convenient she must see him. So he came, as he did everything that must of right be done, to the Crescent.

"All this appraisal is to be gone through," she told him. "And if you will not allow that any of these things ought to be yours in a fair division, you may like to choose some at the valuation."

She might have been a mere business agent, instead of the young woman in whose hands the burdensome accumulation had been left, which, from every sense of abstract justice and of personal wish, she would have shared, or given entirely up, to this intractable young man.

"What use should I have for such things?" he replied. "They would not help me to discharge my trust."

"Why not?"

He looked at her with surprise.

"I have been thinking it out, as well as I can," she said. "I have very much the same questions to settle that you have. And I think that among the things we owe is all the pleasure we can spare out of what we are able to get and understand for ourselves. Beautiful things are not all vanities. They are meant to be enjoyed. Look at the Gladmother with her prisms. Why can't we scatter these things where they would give so much separate delight to ever so many persons, when all in a mass they lose their beauty, and are only a care to a single one?"

Every word she said showed her to him more and more the woman he could honor, the woman who for so long he had believed could not exist. And yet, so long as she was this rich woman, with all his uncle's wealth, that she might think — that everybody might think — he grudged and coveted underneath his impassive concurrence in its legitimate and incontrovertible disposition — he must hold his peace.

Doing that, he held himself so erect, as people say, as to bend backward. "I have simply nothing to do with it," he declared; "and I do not see how I can advise you."

Then she was hurt.

"Dr. North," she said, "I feel that you have everything to do with it. And it is not fair that you should refuse to look at it with me. You *know* that in the natural order of things, the greater part of all would have come to you."

"The natural order of things has happened. I have my share, and it is all, heaven knows, that I want to be responsible for."

"I am glad that even so much of it is in your hands. But I am not glad of the restrictions. They make it most unfair. It ought to be made right between ourselves. I have sent for you to tell you so once more."

"It cannot be made otherwise than it is. It is in nobody's power to change. And it makes no personal difference. It leaves me where it found me, which is precisely what it was meant to do. I have been given a commission only, and I mean of course to carry it out. If the money was twice as much it would be just the same. I suppose you remember your own definition of the 'remnants.' Uncle Abel has simply taken me at my word. I agreed with you, and he knew it. He has left me his remnant, and bequeathed what he regarded as his sufficiency elsewhere. And it has come to you."

"Dr. North, you are absurd. A man's responsibility can't be detached and imposed in that way. It runs through the whole. I certainly inherit my half of it. And why should you resist my conscience, any more than your own? Mayn't I do as I please with what you say is mine?"

"Not in all respects. *You* will find restrictions — obstacles. You are an heiress, and you cannot help it."

"I am only an executor — a trustee, with a large remnant — as you are. Or I *will* be. I have told Mr. Henslee what I shall do. I shall make a will, and execute it myself, as soon as I am out of guardianship. I think that is the proper way to carry out a will. And people can't refuse, you say, what is bequeathed to them. If they try to, it must just lie idle, or be growing to more."

Dr. North could not help laughing.

"That will not trouble me much. It is not likely to concern me, whatever you do. I am eleven years older than you."

"This is silly. As if eleven years meant anything, knowing what we know now about life and death! Dr. North, why won't you help me? Why can't we do this right thing together?"

Was ever man so bestead? And yet in all this there was a gleam of light. He did not know how near the day was to breaking. He thought it still his sworn duty to shut his eyes and turn them from the dawn.

He recurred to his old argument — his stern reiteration.

"It is what he meant. He supposed, of course, that it would be a long time before it could affect you; never, except through the will of your aunt, who would still have the moulding of you; and subject to all the further possibilities of your own life. What he meant by me was, to try me by my own law. He was a keen man. He did not care so much about the money. But he meant to take me down, in my own eyes; to make me see that I was no better than the rest of the world. I don't doubt he wished to make me comfortable — if I could be so, that way; but he would get the best of the argument, first, when there should be no answering back. He would say, 'I told you so' out of every dollar all the rest of my life. But that he cannot do. I shall find the debts; I shall pay everything. Some time — if things are so — I shall deliver up my account. And — if things are so" — he repeated, "I shall simply have done the will of the dead — alive."

"You mean the will that is *afterward*? what he would be wishing now?"

"If afterward is now. We don't know that. But we must act as if it were."

"I think that is grander, Dr. North, than if you knew, or believed absolutely."

She said "you," not "we." He noted it.

"There is nothing grand at all in doing the thing that has to be done," he answered, with his utmost coldness.

"You forget one thing," Estabel said, after a pause in which her tone and manner again adjusted themselves to his. "I represent Aunt Vera."

"Yes; in a clear, undivided half of the estate, free of all conditions."

"Except its duties. We agreed once about what a wife's concern would be in such a case. If those duties were not provided for, they are left to me, as they would have been to her. And do you think Aunt Vera would not have known that her first duty would be to make good to you?"

"That is a duty which you cannot possibly inherit. Or that, at any rate, you cannot do."

He was in full armor now, breastplate and helmet; heart and head in defense of iron mail.

"You make things very hard for me."

"No. I will make them easy, in any other way, if I can. But for this — I will have nothing from you."

How could she know that his hardness was all against himself?

CHAPTER LXII.

APPRAISALS.

THERE was no reason for delay in settling the estate. Certainly the two years allowed by law need not be taken. All possible demands were referable to Dr. North's share. Practically, he was in so far executor, and had simply to be put in possession of his trust. Mr. Clymer's investments were in such shape that a clear division of the personal property was easily possible. As regarded the business, both Mr. Clymer and his partner had become very wealthy men; and although neither of the heirs would find it desirable to retain a money interest in the house, Mr. Steeples had not only his own large capital, but would be at no loss to secure a new partnership or company that would bring in all that might be expedient for continuance or extension. "Clymer and Steeples" could put out a hand where it chose, and find eager response.

So as the winter wore on, things simplified in just the degree that depended upon putting control, as fast as required, into the hands that had final claim. Books were gone over; Dr. North made the most scrupulously careful memoranda, as to all transactions in loan and mortgage. If anybody had suffered — not wrongfully; that was not the supposition upon which he acted, for Clymer and Steeples had been an honorable firm, and everything was done in business fairness; but if anybody had been hard pushed by circumstance, and left in a hard place, he meant to know. He followed up business and personal histories; more than one man who

had succumbed to unfortunate pressure in some crisis, and had never got his sure footing afterward, was surprised by the offer of fresh loan on almost nominal terms; and more than one family, left poor in widowhood and fatherlessness, received a substantial sum "recovered by better turn of an investment" made for them years ago, or from the "closing sale of a property" of which the mortgage had been purchased by Clymer and Steeples, and which had now "realized a large advance in value."

These general statements must indicate and cover such account as can be given of Ulick North's proceedings; our story cannot follow into precise detail.

Meanwhile, Estabel had more minutely wearisome personal cares to discharge. The consignments from abroad kept arriving; it was necessary to do something with them. By advice of her elders, she opened the house in Mount Street, and established herself there temporarily, at least. Aunt Esther and the Gladmother came up from Stillwick to be with her. The shop was left with the jubilant Miss Eliza Gillespy; and a young girl—one of the Speering family, whom Lilian had kindly instructed in flower-making, and helped to develop a "natural knack," as her mother proudly called it, with ribbons and trimmings—was regularly to assist her. Miss Charlock herself, with all the resource and convenience of Topthorpe shops, made bonnets and caps in her pleasant, large upper chamber, and sent them down to Stillwick by Simon Peter Babson.

Mrs. Trubin had the corresponding room on the floor below, that was yet high enough to look over the incline of roofs down the steep hill, and take in the broad, shiny expanse of the Shawme at its broadest and sunniest, and the country margin beyond, white and glittering now, for the most part, with ice and snow, but with wooded outlines and fair slopes that promised and suggested all the beautiful summer green.

As things do happen in this world, so often maligned for its contrarities and so little credited with its happy coincidences, Archibald, of olden elegant service and willing loyalty, had appeared one day in Casino Crescent, having heard that Miss Estabel had "come in for the house and a lot of money," and that she was to take up her abode at the Mount Street home again, and announced that as she would obviously and distinctly need people to help her that knew how, he would be glad to come for as long as she wished, by the day; his wife could run the restourant; he need only look over the accounts. And moreover, his wife had heard from Sara Sullivant that Uncle Zimri was done with her, and "all below," and she would like to come back to Topthorpe if she could hear of a chance. And so it came to pass that Archibald and Sara were again domesticated at Number 84, where they "knew every stick and chip," and had helped pack everything away.

Sara Sullivant had arrived with not only the big trunk — big trunks having become a hallmark of traveling distinction at that time — which she had when she went away; but also with a long, heavy redwood chest, secured with two great hasps and padlocks, which Uncle Zimri had himself constructed on some South Sea voyage when he had been ship's carpenter, and which held all the wonderful accumulations of his seafaring life, and represented to Sara Sullivant as much family splendor and artistic value as any of the Clymers' costly coffers from the Orient and the Mediterranean. Archibald made vigorous remonstrance when the wagon brought them to the garden gate on the little back street.

"How do you expect them things are going to be housed?" he demanded, letting his front door elegance slip. "Why did n't you bring a barn or two, or a meet'n'-house, an' done with it?"

"How did you expect me to come, with all my belongings? Like a fly, in at the window, with my

trunk in my mouth?" Sara retorted, with overwhelming smartness; and had her way, with a compromise. There was room in the long kitchen hall, that ran through the basement in darkness to a storeroom with a sidewalk window on the side street. And with this initial assertion of her resumed supremacy, Sara Sullivan inaugurated herself.

Upstairs, both Sara and Archibald took virtual oath of office in the most alert and instant and deferential discharge of the first possible familiar duties.

They unpacked, and unpacked, box after box, as these were passed through the customs, invoices scanned, heavy duties paid, and delivered up. Swiss carvings, Bohemian glass, Florentine inlaid work, Neapolitan corals, Roman bronzes, alabasters from Pisa, rugs and soft silken draperies from Constantinople and Ispahan, — trophies from every conquered meridian and parallel of world travel.

"The house will be solid with things, from sidewalk to rafters," said Sara Sullivan. "Talk about my chest! 'T is n't a pill box!"

"Where could they have expected to find place for it all?" queried gentle Cousin Lucy.

"I think Uncle Clymer was planning to build at Sycamore Hill," said Estabel.

"A crystal palace or a museum!" interjaculated Aunt Esther, with a sniff, which she checked in the middle, out of traditional reverence for the "passed away."

"You might stock a bazaar, for the benefit of a hospital."

"Or a lunatic asylum," Aunt Esther supplemented under her breath. "It makes *me* feel lunny just to look at 'em."

"I might stock a choice shop, and employ a shop-keeper on a liberal commission," said Estabel quite seriously. "I'll think of that."

"And then the next puzzle will be you won't know what to do with the money," Aunt Esther rejoined.

Dr. North, who had suggested the bazaar, laughed, and got up to go. He came to Mount Street now, after his own fashion, with apparent unconcern. He had a way of shielding himself in the safety of numbers. He talked impersonally; his remarks dropped in like leaves upon a current; or if he directly addressed anybody, it was seldom Estabel. He had most to say to the Gladmother. When he went away, it was with the curtly pleasant generality of "Good-by, all."

"I like your idea of scattering the pleasantness," said Cousin Lucy, a few minutes later, in the china-room, as they inspected the fresh treasures there that had been spread out on shelves and table.

"It's the only way to enjoy any of it myself," said Estabel. "I don't mean conscientiously, but really and simply. Don't you see how the *much* of it makes it seem like nothing? I shall give it away as fast as I can see how, among the 'prisoners and captives,'—people shut up in sick chambers, or in plain, pinched homes. A little would go so far. One thing like this would make a whole room beautiful." She reached up and touched with her fingers, as she spoke, a great ruby-colored cut-glass bowl. "And there's a cool, lovely, deep green one; that's to be the Gladmother's, to hold her pond lilies next summer."

"Well," observed Sara Sullivant, "I've heard of a bull in a china shop, but I believe you'll make things fly smarter! What do you 'spose your Aunt Clymer would say?"

Estabel turned a grave, sweet look upon her. "I think I *know*," she answered. "And that is greatly why I mean to do it."

Perhaps here, as well as anywhere, may come in the mention of a slight occurrence incident to the reopening of the Clymer residence, and the consequent observation and interest in the vicinity.

Estabel met Corinna Chilstone and her brother one morning, coming up the sidewalk, just as she herself was about entering her own door. They stopped, and Corinna stepped eagerly forward, stretching out her hand. Young Chilstone kept a little back, and stood still, but lifted his hat with an air and smile of that one-of-us sort of recognition which to Estabel Charlock, in the former days, had not used to come.

"We are going to be neighbors again?" said Corinna, with a question that was also a glad exclamation. "How nice!"

Estabel gave her hand for a civil touch, and then released it.

"I do not know. I have no fixed plans yet," she answered; and then with the sweetest, most composed simplicity, asked, "Were we ever neighbors?"

"Oh, don't think of those old school days!" Corinna begged, with cordial impulse not to be gainsaid. "I was so silly then. Just beginning; not knowing how to choose, you know, but supposing that I must be so careful in my choosing. *Tout cela est changé, n'est ce pas?*"

"A good deal is changed; but some things always are the same. I don't believe you'll like me any better now."

There was a touch of the old brusqueness, more quietly, gracefully given, still given direct, without the usual veiling of a polite sarcasm. It was not sarcasm; it was only honest statement and predication; that was what made it most keenly sarcastic. Corinna hardly knew what to do with such directness.

"We may come and see you, may n't we, Oswald and I?" she persisted, passing by magnanimously whatever Estabel's speech might mean, whether of modest doubt or of purposed reprisal. And again Mr. Oswald Chilstone bowed with a smile to Estabel, and gave his sister a glance which said, "Fairly delivered!"

Estabel smiled also — a quick, curious flash. She was reminded of Professor Scalchi's queer objugation, "Master Sheelstone! You zhoost like von ee-ll!"

There was undoubtedly something eel-like in the squirm of the Chilstone nature; reptile-like in the easy shedding of its skin.

"Certainly, you may, if we become more settled. My aunt will be with me. My other aunt," she added, a grave shade passing over her face as she saw the surprised puzzle in Corinna's. "The milliner, you know," she explained further, a gleam of amusement again chasing away the shadow.

Corinna laughed, taking it as a joke of the privileged. Estabel Charlock might have any aunt she pleased, now.

"You were always so funny!" she exclaimed weakly. "But we shall come. Good-by!" And the two bowed, and nodded, and passed her, sidling, with lingering grace of leave-taking, on their way.

"Got it both sides of your head, did n't you, Con?" the brother asked, as soon as they were beyond hearing. "She understands hitting out, does n't she?"

Through the wire blind of a basement window, Sara Sullivant had had partial observation of the interview.

She came up into the vestibule to let Estabel in.

"That was them young Chilstones, was n't it?" she asked.

Estabel assented.

"Pretty polite, was n't they?"

"Very. They asked if they might come and call."

"I warrant. They'll take you at appraisal. But-ter-an'-cat!" said Sara Sullivant.

CHAPTER LXIII.

R. THISTLESTOKE.

THERE are two sorts of mediation possible in human affairs: the fetch-and-carry — the go-between kind, often meddlesome and impertinent, sometimes malicious, always hazardous; and the quiet sitting at the receipt of confidence, which makes the recipient wise and quick, in all the instincts of a true sympathy, and therefore a possible sort of spiritual graphophone — a depository of things that repeat themselves by a hidden law of vibration, when the instrument is duly adjusted for the transmission.

The Gladmother was such a receiver and transmitter — quite without deliberate plan, but simply by the working of an inevitable natural principle — between Dr. North and Estabel Charlock. She sat among her rainbows, and listened to each; and unconsciously they talked with each other through her, while imagining themselves very much aloof from intimate intercourse.

It had not proved comfortably practicable for them to consult very much directly upon matters interesting both, but bearing closely as they did upon points of personal difference between them. Estabel grew reticent, if not resentful; and Dr. North, though he knew this was not being true to his own inmost truth, but only to the obligation of circumstance, relapsed into his stiff and guarded restraint.

But Ulick managed to make himself pretty well aware of Estabel's movements through his friendly visits to Mrs. Trubin; and when he had been with the Glad-

mother, Estabel was apt to come in not long after, while things were fresh in the old lady's mind.

Once in a while it happened that the two met in her pleasant room, and then it was almost funny how they made her serve for some mutual bit of communication that neither would have otherwise volunteered.

"I can't make out much in that West Gardens business," the doctor was saying one day, as Estabel entered. He gave her usual greeting, placed a chair for her, and then went on. "Mr. Henslee has never explained; he only says things were settled long ago, in regular way of business; that there is nothing more to be done about it. Of course, I have no right to demand to see Brace and Buckle's books; but they are going on as usual, and what I want is to know *how* things were settled with all others who may have been interested as Mr. Hawtree was."

"I think R. Thistlestoke would tell you," said Estabel.

She might have explained further, without sending him to R. Thistlestoke, for she had seen R. Thistlestoke herself on that very same quest; but she had grown shy of saying even so much to the doctor as the few words in which she thus referred him, since he had repudiated all joint action with her, and maintained his own careful reserve.

Dr. North went to R. Thistlestoke.

R. Thistlestoke knew and told him all about it. He also told him that he had already, at her inquiry, given the same information to Miss Charlock, and long before that to Mr. Henslee. "It's all been looked up and attended to. You're got ahead of. Yes—they was pretty much all friends of mine, those small contractors. I was able to give Mr. Henslee all the points he wanted in the time of it; and Brace and Buckle's books had to do the rest. You see, the amount of it was this: After that matter of Hawtree, and his death, and all,

Mr. Henslee was n't the sort of man to feel easy till he'd sounded things clear through. So he got the other shareholders together, as I understand, and laid it before 'em in open house. 'We've got this property and improved it,' he says, or words to that effect, — I was n't there, — 'and it's going to be a high paying investment. Now we don't want to start the works with a flaw in the machinery, even if it costs something to put things right, instead of letting 'em go right wrong.' I may n't have got the exact words, but that was the sense of 'em; and if it was n't horse sense, it was something better. 'It ain't too late,' he told 'em, 'to stop Brace and Buckle just where they are; and it may prove to be in a hole. They're calling meetings, and talking over creditors to a compromise and expecting to get off with fifty or sixty cents on the dollar, cash; but that don't mean much to mechanics who need all their pay, and ought to have had it straight along. I move that we buy up liabilities, and then go in with our claims, and put the whole thing into chancery if the fellows won't come up to the scratch.' You see I'm putting it into my own words," R. Thistlestoke parenthesized again; "can't help that. Well, some stood out, of course, and one of 'em had three votes; won't say which 't was; anyway, he did stand out to the end — 'on business principles,' he said; and was mad enough when the others give in. Mr. Henslee told 'em it was n't any risk — not half so much as they took on average paper every day. Brace and Buckle had got plenty, it was only to scare 'em into coming out of their hidings and playing up on the square. So finally he had his way; it went by a two thirds vote, the notes were bought up and put into the accounts, and I tell you the face of things altered. Rather'n go into chancery and be all chewed up, they'd hustle round and see what could be done. And the end was, they paid up some, and renewed some, on good security,

and kep' out of bankrup'cy; and now I believe they've got a thumping new contract of stores on Fort Street and are going ahead whooping. Anyway, it's off *your* hands, if 't was ever on. And I told Miss Estabel Charlock the same."

Dr. North was getting light. He had not all the world to set straight. Some things—some people—were pretty near straight already. There was a leaven at work; working himself, from that same leaven, he came in contact with it where it had taken its hold elsewhere in the mass. This responsibility was going to do something, reactively, for himself also. He began to feel less aggressive; less as if he had the whole planet to pull after him.

CHAPTER LXIV.

SPECTACLES.

HE told the Gladmother the result of his interview with Mr. Thistlestoke. "That's an honest man," he said. "And Mr. Harrison Henslee, with all his money, is another." This was great admission from Ulick North; but if Ulick North had a conviction, though it might contradict former prejudice, he was bound to announce it.

"Why do you suppose she — Miss Estabel" — he formalized her name with difficulty — "did not tell me all this herself, instead of sending me to R. Thistlestoke?"

"There might be several reasons. One is, I think likely, that she's as proud, and as afraid, as you are."

Dr. North looked up quickly. "Of what?" he asked.

"Of pretty much the same, maybe," returned the sententious old lady. "I don't pretend to know. But I can see this much — that you're each pulling at an opposite end of a hard knot, and only drawing it tighter. I don't think you're either of you very bright, Dr. Ulick. I've looked for my spectacles before now, when they were on top of my head. And I've heard of a man who could n't find his, because he had n't got 'em to hunt with."

"Yours appear to be on your nose, now, at any rate, Gladmother," said Dr. Ulick, laughing. "You may as well tell me what you see."

"I see yours right at your elbow. It's for you to pick 'em up and put 'em on."

"I think you're talking in riddles, Mrs. Trubin."

"Now you're going into your shell again. It isn't any riddle that Estabel Charlock won't answer questions that you don't ask. You asked me right over her head. She was pretty good to tell you anything. You've shut her up, Ulick North. She would have been glad of your help and advice about this thing you have both got to do, and you have snubbed her. You wouldn't bother yourself with her affairs, and she won't put herself forward to meddle with yours, unless you ask her. That's natural enough. I've always thought you were pretty clever at seeing into things, but you don't seem to have got your eyes open about this. Why can't you see that to make friends of this unrighteous mammon difficulty would be the quickest means of getting it out of your way altogether? Wouldn't two pairs of hands work faster at it than one can? And mayn't you possibly, for fear of a small, shabby thing, be refusing yourself—and somebody else—a great, divine thing?"—

She had gone on, as impelled by something that would be spoken and spoken earnestly; but she broke off with a gentle self-check. "You'd better think it out, Dr. Ulick. I guess I've said all I've got to say—or it's best to say—on that point."

"Perhaps, then, you could enlighten me on some other," suggested Ulick blandly. He had taken up his hat, but, instead of rising to go, sat twirling it between his knees. "I have plenty of puzzles. I've almost come to the end of my direct clues."

"Clues to what?"

"These liabilities of Uncle Clymer's, that I was to set right. There seems just now to be no thoroughfare."

"Did you expect to go back into his whole life, and live it over again for him? That isn't given to us to do, even for ourselves. The only thing is to go on. You're not very bright about that, either, Dr. Ulick."

"I dare say not. I don't feel so. I'm only sure of the one thing, — that all this that has been put into my hands is owed — somewhere."

"Is n't everything — that's in any of our hands? Why should you separate this from all the rest you're trusted with?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean your own life — your power, your skill, your special chances to help. If you can't find clear ways enough of making up for what might have been done by somebody else, to get rid of every cent of this money right off, why not conclude that you're put at liberty by some of it to turn round and give service where you were only earning your bread before? You're a very rich man that way yourself, Ulick North, and you have a very grand errand."

Here was a fresh aspect again. Would that fashion of looking at and interpreting it be a sophistry? He was terribly self-suspicious and afraid of sophistries, this young radical.

"Estabel has more common sense. And common sense and angelic sense are made to work together — not opposite."

"What does Estabel say?"

Do you suppose Dr. North put that question? Not at all, in words. But it was alert in every fibre of him. He was all ears, and his ears were "pricked up."

The Gladmother answered: —

"She says she has the rest of Aunt Vera's life to live for her. She knows it can't be all done at once, and nothing can be wholly done over. 'I shall do it as fast as I see how,' she says. 'Aunt Vera has been interrupted, and I'm taking it up to go on.' I've told her, and Mr. Henslee has told her, — you've found out now that *he* has both kinds of sense, — that whatever else she does, she must keep a safe and sufficient competence for herself, and not be in a blind hurry

with the rest. 'Why, of course,' she said to that; 'that is all down in the will I'm making. I've left enough to myself. That's what Aunt Vera meant, I know. And the rest is the Trust Fund. It's the Sacred Remnant. If I don't find ways to use it up while I live, it goes at last with the competence. And I mean that to go where I think it will work out the errand.' She's got the wisdom of the children, Dr. North. She'll never be a too-rich woman of a too-worldly world. And you need n't lay that up any longer against her."

What, really, had he to lay up against her?

What, in sober reason, to build up against himself? When, after all, the very thing she had wanted of him and had asked of him in simple friendship, had been to help her pull down and put away this barrier that had been set between them? When even the restitution to himself which she had pleaded to make might have been only as the passing from one hand to the other for the doing of a selfsame will, that which their two wills might unite to put to an identical purpose?

What, in the final real argument, had this inheritance practically to do with their possible personal relations?

The Gladmother's Ithuriel touch, reversing the old Satanic transformation, had shown him, under the disappearing guise of an opposing evil phantom, the wing-flash of an angel of light.

And she had told him, this wise Gladmother, that if he wanted to know anything of Estabel, he must ask her himself, straight out.

CHAPTER LXV.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.

DR. NORTH was used to rapid reasoning. He was also used to prompt action upon his conclusions. He determined to ask a question — perhaps more than one — of Estabel Charlock.

He was a man who made, not waited for, his opportunity. He was no more easily turned aside from a formed intent than compelled into anything which he did not intend, or believe to be the thing consonant with his own obligations as he might at any particular time understand them.

The very next day after his talk with the Gladmother in which she had turned that fine light upon the mutual attitude of Estabel and himself, and upon their common problems, he walked over to Mount Street at an early after-dinner hour, which in those days meant early afternoon, before ordinary visitors might be expected, and inquired of Archibald at the door for Miss Estabel Charlock.

"Yes, sir. I think Miss Estabel is in the library, sir," and stood aside, as leaving the way for him to proceed thither.

"Be kind enough to ask if she will see me," said Dr. North.

Archibald, with an impassive propriety that restrained some curious surprise at the unusual formality, obeyed; and returning, announced with the same perfunctoriness what Estabel's gently audible assent had made it unnecessary to repeat, — "Certainly, sir; this

way, sir. Shall I take your overcoat, sir?" And in another moment he was within the room, and Archibald had closed the door behind him.

Going down to the kitchen, the astute official laid injunction upon Sara.

"I'm going down-town of an errand, Miss Sullivant," he said. "Dr. North's upstairs; he's called particular on Miss Estabel. If the bell rings before he goes, you may as well not let anybody else in. They've got some business, most likely. I don't know, and I have n't any orders, but I'll take the responsibility. The doctor's look meant business, if I've any judgment; and I've taken some notice for a considerable spell back. I know some signs by experience. A man holds back — and shies off — and then he marches up. Dr. North's marching up; it ain't a suitable time to interrupt. There may be too much depending. If you was to go and ask Miss Estabel some little faddling question now — Lord! you might as well put a loose pin into that music box they set running the other night. There'd be an end of the tune, an' maybe it'd never play up again. So don't go near the lib'ry, nor let anybody else, unless the house catches fire and there's barely time to warn 'em to get out."

"Got through? P'r'aps you think I never had any experience myself? Experiences don't tell, when you've known how to drop your own pins. I never was one to say yes, just to show folks I'd had the chance to say no." Sara Sullivant was ironing, and she set down her flatiron with a thud that might have vibrated to the third story.

"I did n't say anything about yes and no. Women always grip a thing before it's there; and when it is there, they let go. There's explanations to make sometimes. And Dr. North's been laying up a pretty good stock of 'em. Where's Miss Charlock?"

"Up in her room, finishing off a bonnet."

"Don't let her go down to the lib'ry, then, to consult whether a feather shall stick up or stick down." And having provided against all conceivable contingencies, Archibald took himself off.

Sara Sullivant went straight to Miss Charlock's room with an armful of fresh linen, and certain household questions for more or less extended consideration. With all this munition she mounted guard. She thought she could keep that last feather from being placed too critically in point of time. If nothing else would do, she would stand sentry with leveled musket.

Estabel was sitting at the library table. She had been copying some inventories, and the loose memorandum slips lay about her. She rose when the doctor came in.

"May I talk with you a little while? Or are you very busy?"

"It is always easy to be busy; and it is almost always easy to make time," she answered, with a grace of courtesy that just stopped short of impulsive readiness.

"Perhaps there are a number of things that I might say—or ought to say," the doctor began, as he drew up the chair she offered him, and she resumed her seat beside the table, the corner of which was as a kind of redoubt between them. "I think I owe you, in some matters, an account of myself."

Estabel said never a word. "I think you do" might have been inferred from the quiet pause in which she listened; but she neither contradicted nor affirmed by even any slightest gesture.

"Will you let that wait and answer me something first?"

"If I can."

"Why did you not tell me, yourself, all that story

of Brace and Buckle, and Mr. Henslee's dealing with them, instead of sending me to R. Thistlestoke?"

"I did not think you wanted it from me. You did not ask me. And I knew R. Thistlestoke could do it best."

"That brings me to my point. Have I offended you?"

"Not that exactly. You have simply shown me that we cannot work together; that our affairs had better not be mixed. And you have said you would have nothing from me."

Estabel spoke without a shade of rancor, and with the half play of a smile.

"You know what that meant," Dr. North answered her quickly; but he understood how her words went to the root of the matter.

After a minute's silence, he spoke from the very root of the matter himself.

"I will ask you everything, now. I will take whatever you will choose to give me."

That was plain enough, if things had only been a little plainer before. But on the face of it, it seemed to require of Estabel no recognition beyond that of a withdrawal from the cold position of determined unconcern, of unqualified refusal. And it was late, now, for this to come.

"What has changed your mind?" she asked him.

"My mind is not changed. It is only cleared up — convinced."

"Of what, Dr. North?"

"Of your being all that you have irresistibly proved yourself to be; all that I did not think I should ever find. Of your being more simply wise, more heavenly true, than I am. That out of your truth, you see truth. I am ready to believe what you believe; as if in some things I were blind, but you could be eyes for me. I am ready to do what you find good to do. I am in your hands, Estabel."

This was unconditional surrender, but not in such form that she could answer to all that it implied — that she could quite dare let herself think that it implied.

She caught her breath; but she looked at him with large, frank eyes, that — as he had declared of her pure vision — would search and find the truth.

"You think all that of me? You mean all that, Dr. North?"

"That, and more. May I say the rest?"

She hurried a little with her reply. The great impending revelation was too strange; it startled her. She would keep it back a space. She would keep to that first moot point, the resolving of which between them would of itself make her happy. "I am glad you will be friends with me," she began. "I am very glad that you can believe in me. I was afraid you never would. I knew that you disliked me once — for a good while" —

"You are mistaken, Estabel. I never did dislike you."

"Then I don't understand" — and there she stopped. She could not bring up all the past, and all her feeling in it, at once confessing herself and forcing him to fuller explanation.

But Dr. North had begun to explain. It was what he had come to her to-day to do, and he never left things half done.

"No. I told you that I owed you an account of myself. But before I could suppose that it would signify to you, I had to ask — what I have asked. I don't always understand myself. I am made so — or I have been twisted so — that I can't take anything without test. I am jealous of my own impressions. I watch and question them. It isn't easy for me to believe — all that I most desire to believe."

And here, in his turn, he hesitated.

To that Estabel could speak. "That is the whole

trouble, Dr. North. It is just what has been in the way of my—understanding. I was always running against your doubts—of me, and of things that I could n't bear to think you doubted. You can't believe. You want to see everything; to put your finger upon a thing before you will acknowledge it is there. And yet"—she smiled a lovely, timid smile, deprecating what might seem like such arraignment—"you know we cannot really touch, after all. There's always a space between that we have to believe over. We have to trust—each other, and all the things that we are put in any sort of relation with. We are made up of impressions."

"I believe *you*. I have said that you may testify to me, if you will. Will you take me in hand, Estabel?"

Still she answered him on the score of friendship. "I think I am taking you in hand," she said. "I have brought up old things against you, that in some part I think differently about now. I had begun to see how true you had to be with yourself before you could say that anything was absolutely true to you; and how sure you would be to find out how the truth in you was the truth everywhere. I did want you to find some of it in me; that you would just not think meanly of me—just be friends. I should be so proud—so glad. And I thought we were almost friends, when this poor money came and stopped it."

"No." The syllable broke with emphasis from Ulick's lips. "Money stopped nothing. It only forced back upon itself what could not be stopped—what it was too late to stop. It would not have hindered friendship. It did forbid—it only stopped me from—not friendship, Estabel; it would not have touched that; it was from"—

She interposed before the word. "You will let me make it right, then, now? You will divide with me?"

"No," he said again impetuously. "I will not divide. I will have all or nothing. Will you not let me say that I want *you*? I will help you give away your last dollar, if you will give me yourself."

Estabel looked in his face a moment. Her own flushed. The tears welled up into her eyes. Then, slowly, she stretched out both her hands to him. He took them in a strong grasp. He stood up, came close, and leaned over her. "I love you with my very soul," he whispered.

And Estabel answered low, "I believe you, Dr. North."

He leaned closer. He held the little hands to his strong heart. He searched into her eyes with his own, that glowed fervently.

"How much does that mean? You only believe? I shall want more. And you must not say *Dr. North*."

"*Believing is all*. I love you, Ulick."

After a happy quietness they began to talk of many things. On everything a new light shone; all was bright as in the rising of a new day. Many things — yet always the same, because through and in them all had run, and at this supreme moment had been made manifest, the history of that love which now and for always was declared and understood, without a cloud or doubt between them; which now and for always, in all these things, in all that these should come to, in all else that should meet them and grow in them for all their life, which was to be one, should shine and rule and bless, keeping the holy, beautiful unity. Nothing would be small, nothing could be adverse, nothing could harass and perplex, because nothing would separate. All would have to do with, and to further, and to manifest joyfully, that central, everlasting truth of life, — that which when his children know, makes them know God.

It was very sweet now to talk of what they might

do together with this money that had so nearly driven them apart.

"You will give me my freedom in it!" Estabel said suddenly, a new perception striking her of what her changed position would be. "I shall not have to wait the whole two years for anything!"

And then, stopping as suddenly as she had exclaimed, she blushed beautifully; and Ulick did not answer her in words, but by use of his silent prerogative, which made her blush the more.

Before he went away, standing with his arm around her, and his eyes looking down into her face without any more reserve of that which had been kept back so long, Ulick said to her softly, "I do not think I have disguised myself, Estabel, except in this that I have given up disguising. You know what I am, and what I am not. And you take me, bravely and sweetly, just as I am? You dare it, and you wish it?"

Estabel gave him a quick smile, that had in it at once a flash of fun, and withal a wonderful tenderness.

"You were so determined not to disguise yourself that you did not behave yourself," she said. "I told the Gladmother that long ago. You behaved somebody else that was not you at all. But I do not think," and a lovely seriousness possessed both face and voice, "that we take each other so much for what we are, as for what we are going to be — and should never be," she ended almost in a whisper, leaning her head down toward his shoulder, "without each other."

CHAPTER LXVI.

AS A SAPPHIRE STONE.

TWILIGHT was falling that winter afternoon, though the days were lengthening, before anybody came near the library.

Dr. North had just left the house, and Estabel had escaped upstairs, when Archibald ventured cautiously in to light the gas.

The next day the whole house knew. And Casino Crescent knew. And there was great gladness. And in the Gladmother's room the rainbows shone and streamed in noonday sunshine when Ulick and Estabel came to her for her tender word of blessing.

And a letter went that very day that would find Lilian and Harry in some fair West Indian island, on their leisurely journey northward, coming home over the long sea leagues with the springtime.

It was a few days later that Ulick brought to Estabel the betrothal ring. There had needed a little time, he said, to make it what he wanted.

It was an Asteria. A sapphire, cut *en cabochon*.

Estabel looked into its blue clearness. The six rays shot from its centre their sparkle of light.

"Oh, the beautiful star!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. It is your name-star — Hester-bel."

He bent his head near hers, over the gem of truth, and lifted the finger upon which he had placed it to his lips.

"Do you know," he asked her, "what you are going to be? *Estabel North*, my sure, beautiful Polar Star!"

Estabel laughed — a low, happy, tremulous laugh. “A free translation — or an astronomic transposal” — she replied. “But” — looking up at him with that glance he had only known from her these last, few, perfect days — “the globe is rectified — for us.”



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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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